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Chaconnes and Passacaglias in the Keyboard Music of François Couperin (1668-1733) and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1665-1746)

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Chaconnes and Passacaglias in the Keyboard Music of François Couperin (1668-1733) and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1665-1746)

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this treatise to my parents, Bong-Kab Park and Myung-Ja Jung,

and Professor Hyoung-Kyu Kim with much gratitude and respect.

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Chaconnes and Passacaglias in the Keyboard Music of François Couperin (1668-1733) and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1665-1746)

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The related ground-bass musical genres chaconne and passacaglia experienced many changes throughout the roughly 200-year period in which the genres were being widely cultivated. The genres are designated as continuous variations on a repeated musical element; however, problems of genre labeling have made it difficult to ascertain the history of the genre.

The purpose of this treatise is to explore the treatment of the genres chaconne and passacaglia in the music of the contemporaries François Couperin and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, specifically, the ways in which they developed the genres within their keyboard repertoire. Analysis of selected

chaconnes and passacaglias will help illustrate the form and reveal both differences and similarities within the genres. In addition, this study will examine the ways in which Couperin and Fischer transformed and manipulated the bass variation genre and developed it within their own musical style. The overall goal of this undertaking is to provide greater resources for interpreting these two composers' styles to pianists who wish to perform these pieces.

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Introduction

This study explores the genres chaconne and passacaglia in the keyboard repertoire of François Couperin (1668-1733) and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1665-1746). Although the two composers were contemporaries, each has distinct approaches to these two musical genres. In late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France, harpsichord music flourished through the works of Jacques Champion Chambonnières, Louis Couperin and François Couperin. Described as "the most important master of the suite between Froberger, Bach, and Handel," Fischer clearly influenced his successor Johann Sebastian Bach, and introduced both French and German styles in his keyboard music. While there exists no clear information regarding Fischer's life and musical development, many authorities regard him as one of the foremost composers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and consider his works the single greatest influence on the generation of J. S. Bach. Fischer's output—of orchestral, keyboard, theatre, and Catholic sacred music—reflects influences both French and German. His orchestral ballet suite *Le journal du printemps*, in particular, contains many musical characteristics, bearing particular resemblance to the music of Jean-Baptiste Lully.

Much Baroque keyboard music was originally composed for the harpsichord. Baroque repertoire for the majority of modern piano performers

consists almost exclusively of works by Johann Sebastian Bach and Domenico Scarlatti, with other Baroque harpsichord repertoire generally overlooked. This is due in part to the fact that the majority of modern piano performers are not sufficiently trained in harpsichord performance and thus have uncertainties about appropriate performance technique. In discussing the complexities involved in performing Johann Sebastian Bach's music, Friedrich Blume lists the following considerations for the performer: "More important for the performance of any music than a particular 'sonority' are musicality, the understanding and shaping of musical structure, the choice of something approaching the correct tempo, the convincing and stylish execution of articulation and ornamentation, the perception of the affection, emotional content, musical symbolism, and so on."[1] However, it is unreasonable to expect pianists to completely modify their performance technique in order to learn harpsichord repertoire, and to do this would likely guarantee that the majority of pianists would be unwilling to learn the repertoire.

While drastic modifications in technique are unnecessary, Baroque keyboard performance practice must be an essential consideration for the modern pianist playing Baroque keyboard repertoire. Furthermore, an understanding of Baroque performance practice offers performers greater expressive possibilities on the modern piano. When playing the harpsichord, performers may rely on

[1] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 173 n. 62.

guidelines suggested by eighteenth-century harpsichord manuals in order to determine appropriate articulations, tempi, rhythms, and ornamentations. In consulting these manuals, however, the performer must consider the fact that not all guidelines are appropriate for all repertoires. The guidelines offered in these manuals vary, depending on the region in which the harpsichord was constructed. In order to determine an appropriate performance technique, therefore, the modern pianist must give careful consideration to the particular region and time period in which the repertoire was written. Furthermore, when playing the repertoire on the modern piano, a different set of performance considerations arise.

This dissertation will focus on the ways in which the chaconne and passacaglia evolved in the hands of Francois Couperin and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer during the transition from the late Baroque toward the early Classical period, with particular emphasis on the period 1710-1740, and on the specific musical characteristics that are reflected during this time period. It will begin with a brief historical review of the chaconne and passacaglia, addressing the specific musical features of each genre. In addition, this project will demonstrate the ways in which the two composers espoused new musical trends and treated the genres in their own distinctive ways. A close examination of these pieces will trace a formal development in which the genres adopt, and are

combined with, the rondo principle and ternary form, and the process by which the motivic idea begins to infiltrate and saturate the growing interest in the musical principle of imitation.

Chapter 1. Review of Literature on the Origin of the Chaconne and Passacaglia

There have been incessant debates among music scholars regarding the origin of the chaconne and passacaglia. While some assume that chaconne and passacaglia are almost indistinguishable musical styles, others highlight the differences between the two.[2] Alexander Silbiger states that, despite their stylistic similarities, the chaconne and passacaglia were considered distinct genres prior to Frescobaldi.[3] Although there are no surviving musical examples of this period, Spanish literature of the sixteenth century documents that the chaconne and passacaglia originated from the popular guitar music of Spain.[4] Many scholars assume that the *Chacona* appeared as a dance-song which was traditionally accompanied by Spanish guitar, castanets and tambourine. According to Richard

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[2] In the Harvard Dictionary, Elaine Sisman defines the passacaglia as an improvised continuous variation with a four-bar ostinato in the bass. According to Sisman, the passacaglia was "played on the guitar between the stanzas or at the ends of songs." The passacaglia tends to be in minor following the pattern i-iv-V or i-iv-V-i. The bass line can be changed in successive phrase, or extra harmonies might be inserted in a limited set of formulas. A descending tetrachord was used in many operatic laments. The chaconne, similar to passacaglia, is a dance song, which adopts the continuous variation technique in the bass. Its origin was in Spain and Italy in the late sixteenth century. Chaconnes frequently tend to be in major. Both rondo and variation schemes were favored in the late seventeenth century, and the ostinato later developed into an eight-bar pattern. Both styles are in triple meter and were written for all type of instruments and ensembles, although those for keyboard are more common [Elaine Sisman, "Passacaglia," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Havard University Press, 1986), ed. Don Randel, 611].

[3] Alexander Silbiger, "Passacaglia and Ciaccona: Genre Pairing and Ambiguity from Frescobaldi to Couperin," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (1996) www.sscm-jscm.org, accessed in July 2002.

[4] See the article by Thomas Walker for the details. Walker, "Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on their Origin and Early History," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21 (1968), 300-313.

Hudson, the earliest literary reference to the chacona is *Satira hecha a las cosas que pasan en el Peru* (1598) by Mateo Rosa de Oquendo. The chacona appears as one of a list of dances in the following poem: "La zarabanda y balona, el churunba y el taparque, la chacona y el totarque . . ."[5] In the following year the *Chacona* was also described as a dance in two other Spanish references, Simón Aguado's *entremés*, *El Platillo* and Juan de la Cerda's *Vida politica de todos los estados de mujeres*.[6]

Neither a song nor a dance, the Passacaglia was initially a short musical gesture which functions as an introduction or ritornello. The earliest reference to the genre is provided in the anonymous Spanish work *Pícara Justina* (1605)**,** in which the word is used to mean as a song with guitar accompaniment.[7] The term "pasacalle" is derived from the Spanish *pasar* (to walk) and *calle* (street) and seems to have been used in reference to short instrumental refrains attached to lute and keyboard dances, similar to "ripresa" and "ritornello" passages in other late sixteenth-century sources.[8] Characteristic of these short pieces is a I-IV-V-I harmonic pattern which recurs throughout.

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[5] Rosas de Oquendo y otros, ed. Rubén Vargas Ugarte (Clasicos Peruanos, Vol. V [Lima, 1955]), 29. Richard Hudson cites in his article "Further Remarks on the Passacaglia and Ciaccona," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 23 (1970), 305-306.

[6] Walker, "Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on their Origin and Early History," 300-301.

[7] *Ibid.,* 305.

[8] Richard Hudson, "The Passacaglia and Chaconne in Italian Keyboard Music of the 17th Century," *The Diapason*, 60/12 (1969), 22.

The chaconne and passacaglia were developed in early seventeenth-century Italy during a period of heightened popularity of Spanish five-course guitar music. Thomas Walker ascribes the earliest examples of chaconne and passacaglia to Girolamo Montesardo's collection of Italian guitar music, *Nuova inventione d'intavolatura per sonare li balletti sopra la chitarra spagniuola* of 1606. According to Hudson, "the height of popularity of the chaconne and passacaglia as ostinato form runs from about 1630 to the early 1640s. The two, however, continued to appear throughout the rest of the seventeenth century, and even into the eighteenth century."[9]

Spanish guitar tablature at the time was based on *rasgueado* playing, in which brief chord sequences were strummed downwards and upwards. Most guitar ciaccone during this period are in triple meter in the major mode, with a I-V-vi-V harmonic pattern throughout.[10] By contrast, the passacaglia were in either duple or triple, major or minor, with the harmonic progression I-IV-V-I in major or i-iv-V-i in minor.[11] Thus, the principle of ostinato, or repetition of a single short harmonic phrase, can be found in both passacaglia and ciaccona. While it is

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[9] Walker, "Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on their Origin and Early History," 319-320.

[10] Hudson addresses a few examples of chaconne in minor mode. For example, an Italian guitar pieces, a few French lute and clavecin works, and an English chaconne. Richard Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne: the Historical Evolution of Four Forms that Originated in Music for the Five-Course Spanish Guitar* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1982), vol. 4, xxiii.

[11] According to Hudson, a few examples of pasacaille in major exist, in particular, from Spain and Italy. Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*, vol.3, xxiv.

apparent that the passacaglia and ciaccona in early Italian guitar music were distinct musical entities, differing not only in harmonic content but often in meter, mode, and function, both forms shared a common procedural technique—that of presenting chord patterns within a specific harmonic framework.

According to Hudson, in the Italian keyboard music of the seventeenth century, the ciaccona appeared as a derivation of a harmonic pattern whereas the passacaglia was developed through "a process of melodic expansion."[12] Since the incorporation of the *punteado* technique into the *rasgueado* playing style in guitar music, bass patterns in both guitar and keyboard music moved from a chordal to a more linear playing style, and, as a consequence, chaconne and passacaglia were increasingly associated with a bass ostinato. It is not always clear whether chaconne and passacaglia are defined by a bass pattern or by a chordal sequence; both apply. The basic harmonic pattern of chaconne and passacaglia and the slightly embellished bass pattern often appeared in a "neutral form" which was, most commonly a descending tetrachord pattern. This pattern was favored by most Baroque keyboard composers throughout Europe.[13]

[12] *Ibid*., 24.
[13] *Ibid*.

Many scholars agree that Frescobaldi was the first composer to use the genres chaconne and passacaglia for keyboard music.[14] Frescobaldi's "Partite sopra Ciaccona" and "Partite sopra Passacaglia" from *Il Secondo Libro di Toccate Canzone versi d'hinni magnificat gagliarde corrente et altre partite d'intavolatura di cembalo et organo* (1627) are considered the earliest and most important keyboard examples of the genre. A triple-meter piece in the major mode, "Partite sopra Ciaccona," consists of fifteen numbered phrases based on the four-bar harmonic phrase. Throughout the piece, Frescobaldi uses the straight-forward harmonic progression I -V, which is applied in two slightly different variations -- I-V-vi-(I^6-ii^6_5)-V and I-V-vi-(vii^{o6}/V)-V. "Partite sopra Passacaglia, " by contrast, contains the harmonic progression, i-V^6-iv^6-(ii^6)-V-i and follows the stepwise descending line (D-C-B^b-A). It is in the minor mode and changes from simple triple (3/2) to compound duple (6/4) meter, thus creating a hemiola effect. The phrases are three measures in length in the triple meter section, with the concluding ten phrases in duple meter two measures in length. This type of phrase pairing appears throughout the work.

[14] Hudson, "The Passacaglia and Chaconne in Italian Keyboard Music of the Seventeenth Century," 22. See also Walker, "Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on their Origin and Early History," 313 and Silbiger, "Passacaglia and Ciaccona: Genre Pairing."

Silbiger evaluates Frescobaldi as a crucial figure who played an important role in redefining the genres chaconne and passacaglia.[15] He describes the distinctions made by Frescobaldi in his treatment of the genre pair:

> There is, however, a notable difference in character between the two pieces. The passacaglia has a gentle rocking feeling, perhaps with a touch of melancholy, whereas the ciaccona strides forward in a joyful, up-beat manner. The passacaglia achieves its character by smooth, oscillating melodic motion and, of course, its minor mode, whereas the ciaccona is in major and has strongly directed melodic lines with frequent skips. Meter and rhythm support the character differentiation: the ciaccona gets through a cycle after only two groups of three beats; the passacaglia takes more time to go about its business, not reaching the end of a cycle until after four groups of three beats. Also note that the passacaglia tends to stress the second beat of each group (which momentarily restrains forward motion) and the ciaccona the third beat (which helps it glide along). Finally, the passacaglia has a much higher incidence of dissonances on strong beats than the ciaccona, especially as downbeat suspensions.[16]

Unlike its Italian and Spanish neighbors, in France the first *passacaille* and *chaconne* appear in the lute repertory. *Passacaille*, *La Folia* in the fifth book of *Airs de différents auteurs* (1614) by Henry du Bailly,[17] and *La chacona á 7* in the second edition of *Le secret des muses* (1618) by Nicolas Vallet are important examples of this repertory.[18] The French *passacaille* and *chaconne*, however,

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[15] Silbiger, "Passacaglia and Ciaccona: Genre Pairing."
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Walker, "Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on their Origin and Early History," 310.
[18] William Bates, "The Passacaglia and Ciaccona in German Keyboard Music of the Baroque Period" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1978), 13.

were by no means developed extensively in the lute repertory.[19] These two genres were first cultivated for the keyboard by the French composers Jacques Champion de Chambonnières (ca. 1602-1672) and Louis Couperin (ca. 1626-1672).

Hudson showed that French composers, among them Chambonnières and L. Couperin, synthesized the genres chaconne and passacaglia with the rondo principle. According to Hudson, "The French often join several phrases together and treat this unit as a refrain. Sometimes the *couplets* (the sections between refrains) modulate and even abandon the ostinato phrase length. The French treatment of the passacaglia and ciaconne illustrates the wide variety of formal structures that can emerge through the process of formula selection."[20] Elizabeth Hughes provides a brief history of the genre pairs concluding with the period during which the passacaglia settled in France and was combined with the rondo principle: "the form which the chaconne and passacaglia adopted in France—that of the rondeau—was also presaged in Spain, for the system of refrain forms exhibited by existing Spanish chaconne texts was that of the rondeau. This becomes the form most frequently used by the French clavecinists, including

[19] According to Hudson, "In France two apparently separate courses of development were important: the earlier chaconne that appeared in lute and keyboard music (where the passacaille was very rare), and the later orchestral chaconne, which, like the passacaille, became extremely popular." Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*, vol. 4, xiii .

[20] Hudson, "The Passacaglia and Chaconne in Italian Keyboard Music of the Seventeenth Century," 24.

Jacques Champion de Chambonnières and Louis Couperin." [21] While French keyboard chaconne and passacaglia appear as a form of bass ostinato in a few anonymous composers' works, these two genres most commonly appear in the rondeau form.

In Germany, the passacaglia and chaconne flourished during the latter part of the Baroque era (1675-1750). The genres were not as attractive to early German Baroque composers as they were to the French keyboard composers. Hudson assesses Germany as a strategic place in the development of the passacaglia: "In Germany, Italian and French influences met, as in the case of the passacaglia, to bring the form to its final state of development."[22] He also points out the influence of the composer Johann Kerll on German developments of chaconne and passacaglia: "The South German composer Johann K. Kerll has variations on both the ciaconna and the passacaglia that continue the tradition of Frescobaldi's 1627 works. . . Powerful influence, however, came to Germany

[21] Armand Machabey, "Les Origins la Chaconne et la Chaconne et de la Passacaille," *Revue de Musicilogie*, XXVIII[e] année (1946): 2-4. Cited by Elizabeth Hughes in her thesis, "The Early Seventeenth-Century Keyboard Chaconne and Passacaglia: Louis Couperin and Gerolamo Frescobaldi" (Master thesis, Cornell University, 1968), 46. See also Eugene Wolf, "Rondeau," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986, ed. Don Randel, 716-717.

[22] Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*, vol. 4, xiii.

from France, where a quite different development of the passacaglia and ciaccona took place." [23]

Richard Hudson depicts the developmental process of the passacaglia over various media by emphasizing French and Italian influences upon Germany and, in particular, the formal features of the genre:

> Even before 1640 the passacaglia occurred as an independent variation form in Italian keyboard and vocal music, and after mid-century also in chamber music. After Corbetta's two books were published in Paris early in the 1670's, the form became especially popular in French guitar and orchestral music, where it developed special sectionalized structures. . . From around 1675 until the end of the Baroque period, French and Italian influences converged to produce numerous examples in Germany, most of them for organ or harpsichord, others for violin or chamber ensemble.[24]

The keyboard passacaglia was taken up almost simultaneously by J. C. Kerll in southern Germany, J. P. Krieger in central Germany, and Balthasar Erben in northern Germany. Keyboard ciacconas, by contrast, were first cultivated in Southern Germany by Bertoldo Spirido and J. C. Kerll. Through the efforts of Johann Pachelbel, the new genre soon made its way into Central Germany and was then transported to North Germany by Dietrich Buxtehude.[25] As compared with keyboard chaconne and passacaglia, those written for instrumental

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[23] Hudson, "The Passacaglia and Chaconne in Italian Keyboard Music of the Seventeenth Century," 24.
[24] Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*, vol. 3, xiii.
[25] Bates, "The Passacaglia and Ciaccona in German Keyboard Music of the Baroque Period," 26.

ensembles by such composers as Biber, Georg Muffat, and J. C. F. Fischer followed French models more closely or combined the French and German approaches.[26]

The French and German composers of the last quarter of the seventeenth century were a direct influence on the music of F. Couperin and J. C. F. Fischer, whose music will be discussed in the following chapters.

[26] Alexander Silbiger, "Passacaglia," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 19: 192-194, 2nd ed. New York: Grove's Dictionaries Inc., 2001, 193 and "Chaconne," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 5: 410-415, 2nd ed. New York: Grove's Dictionaries Inc., 2001, 414.

Chapter 2: The Life and Music of Couperin and His Keyboard Chaconne and Passacaglias

Couperin's Life and Music

François Couperin [*le grand*] was born in 1668 into a French musician family and was active as a composer, organist, and harpsichordist. While very little documentation exists on the composer, the information contained in the preface to Couperin's published collections offer a glimpse into his life. It is assumed by several scholars that Couperin's initial music studies were with his father, Charles Couperin, brother of Louis Couperin and organist of Saint Gervais. Following Charles Couperin's death in 1679, Couperin continued to study with Jacques-Denis Thomelin, close friend of the Couperin family and organist of Saint-Jacque-la Boucherie. In 1685, F. Couperin, then aged eighteen, took over his father's position as organist at Saint Gervais.[27]

Following the death of Jacques-Denis Thomelin, *organiste du roi* at the Royal Chapel, Couperin was hired to take his place in 1693. In effect, this prestigious appointment led to further career opportunities, including the opportunity to teach harpsichord to children of royalty. In so doing, Couperin was taking advantage of Louis XIV's edict of 1696, which conferred the status of nobility upon persons in respectable employment who could afford to pay for the privilege. In 1702, Couperin thus became a Knight (*Chevalier*) de l'Ordre de Latran.

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[27] This biographical discussion is based on Edward Higginbottom's "François Couperin" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 21: 653-656.

Couperin was active as a composer of both chamber music and sacred music; however, his most recognized role at court was that of harpsichordist. When D'Anglebert could no longer serve as royal harpsichordist due to failing eyesight, Couperin was appointed *joueur de clavecin* in his place. While the facts remain somewhat unclear, it seems that Couperin remained active in this role as long as the King maintained good health. Couperin's official role at court is unclear after Louis XIV's death in 1715, but he continued to teach royal pupils for a number of years.

In 1690, Couperin obtained a licence to print and sell his music. Couperin published most of his works during his lifetime, beginning with his organ pieces, *Pièces d'Orgue* (1690), four harpsichord collections (1713, 1717, 1722 and 1730), a treatise on playing the harpsichord (*L'art de toucher le clavecin*, 1716, revised in 1717), chamber music collections (*Concerts royaux*, 1722; *Les gouts-réunis*, 1724; *Les Nation*s, 1726), a sacred vocal music collection (*Leçons de tenébres*, 1713 and 1717), and secular vocal music collection (Air in *Recueils d'airs sérieux et à boire*, 1697-1712).

Couperin inherited the musical tradition of his predecessors and developed it in various genres—air, dance, harpsichord suite, motet, organ mass, ballet, *tragédie lyrique* (French opera)—with his unique French taste. Moreover, his

special concern about the Italian style, in particular that of Corelli, made him produce several trio sonatas, collected in *Les Nations*.

Brief Overview of Couperin's Keyboard Music

Of the many compositions written by Couperin, his harpsichord works are the most widely known. The works are contained in four collections of twenty-seven *Ordres* published over a period of seventeen years: *Le Premier Livre* [The First Book, published in 1713]; *Le second Livre* [The Second Book, published in 1716, revised in 1717]; *Le Troisième Livre* [The Third Book, published in 1722]; and *Le Quatriême Livre* [The Fourth Book, published in 1730]. In addition, Couperin published a treatise on playing the harpsichord, *L'art de toucher le clavecin* (1716), containing eight harpsichord preludes, in which Couperin provides suggestions for body position, hand position, and fingering and includes a comprehensive table of ornamentations.

Couperin followed the tradition of most composers who preceded him by grouping his pieces in "orders" or suites of dances which usually include a "core" of allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue, all composed in the same key or parallel minor. Unlike his predecessors Chambonnières or L. Couperin, F. Couperin provided characteristic titles to most movements, many of which paid homage to fellow-composers, musicians, and friends, but also painted portraits of landscapes, natural phenomena, events, and ideas. Jane Clark suggests that the titles Couperin assigns may serve as a crucial key to understanding the performance of his

music.[28] In the preface to *Le Premier Livre*, Couperin elucidates the ways in which musical poetics serve as a vessel for the composer's psychological state:

> I have always had a subject in mind when composing these pieces—subject suggested on different occasions. Thus the title correspond to ideas I have had; I hope I may be excused from explaining them further. But since, among the titles, there are some which appear to indulge my own vanity, I should add that the pieces they describe are types of portraits which have sometimes been judged quite lifelike when I performed them, and that any flattery in the titles is intended for those memorable originals wished to depict rather than for the copies I have made in these musical portraits.[29]

> J'ay toûjours eu un objet en composant toutes ces pieces: des occasions différentes me l'ont fourni. Ainsi les Titres respondent aux idées que j'ay eues, on me dispensera d'en render compte; cependant, comme, parmi ces Titres, il y en a qui semblent me flater, il est bon d'avertir que les pieces qui les portent sont des espéces de portraits qu'on a trouvé quelques fois assés ressemblans sous mes doigts, et que la plûpart de ces Titres avantageux sont plûtôt donnés aux aimables originaux que j'ay voulu representer, qu'aux copies que j'en ay tirées.

Thus, Couperin's four collections of harpsichord works both follow closely the French keyboard suite tradition and achieve a high level of musical imagination through descriptive titles. David Tunley summarizes the imaginative characteristics of Couperin's keyboard suite as follows: "Couperin's luxuriantly embellished lyricism had its precedents in the suave melodies of Chambonnières,

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[28] Jane Clark, "Les Folies Françoises," (*Early Music*, vol. 53, no. 2, April 1980, 163-169), 163.

[29] Philippe Beaussant, *François Couperin*, trans. Alexandra Land, Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press (1990), 221-222.

his seriousness and gravity in the suites of D'Anglebert, while his fondness for the picturesque stems from the Gallic tradition as a whole."[30] In his *Le Parnasse François,* Titon du Tillet praises F. Couperin's harpsichord pieces as "filled with excellent harmony and having a noble and gracious melody."[31]

The two main musical forms used by Couperin in harpsichord works are the binary (AB) and rondo form.[32] Whereas most dance movements are in the two-part (AB) form, Chaconne and Passacaglias are in rondo form in variation style.

Musical texture in Couperin's pieces is closely related to the *Stile Brisé* (or 'broken texture'), a style derived from lute technique that employs musical fragments in alternating ranges rather than sustaining a constant melodic line. Unlike his uncle, Louis, François Couperin integrates imitative texture into the broken style, thus providing additional resources for counterpoint in these works.

Since the harpsichord has limitations in sustaining a long musical line, ornamentation is an alternative method by which the musical line may be expressed. When the French lute school lost prominence after the mid-seventeenth century, its rich ornamental vocabulary was adopted by the upcoming

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[30] David Tunley, *Couperin*, British Broadcasting Corporation Music Guides, London, England (1982), 72-73.

[31] Titon du Tillet, *Le Parnasse François* (Paris, 1732, Supplement 1743), 665. Quoted by David Tunley in *Couperin*, 24.

[32] Edward Higginbottom in New Grove suggests three structures, binary, rondo and chaconne, but from my observations and study, I believe that the chaconne category is misguided.

school of clavecinists which included Champion de Chambonnières, Jean Henri d'Anglebert, Gaspard Le Roux and others. French composers, in particular, provided various ornamentation marks to express their intention. F. Couperin's concern with ornamentation can be seen in his preface to the *Pièce de Clavecin*, Book Three:

> I am always surprised (after the great care I have taken to indicate the appropriate ornaments for my pieces, which are rather completely explained in my description of my playing method known by the title *L'Art de toucher le clavecin*) to hear of persons who have learned these pieces without following my rules. This is an unpardonable oversight, the more so because it is entirely improper to add whatever ornaments one wishes. I affirm that my pieces should be executed exactly as I have marked them, and that they will never make the correct impression on persons of true taste so long as the performer does not observe to the letter all that I have marked, adding and removing nothing.[33]

> Je suis toujours surprise (apres les soins que je me suis donné pour marquer les agrémens qui conviennent à mes Piéces, don't j'ay donné, à part, une explication assés intelligible dans une Méthode particulière, connue sous le titre de L'art de toucher le Clavecin) d'entendre des personnes qui les ont apprises sans s'y assujétir. C'est une negligence qui n'est pas pardonable, d'autant qu'il n'est point arbitraire d'y mettre tels agrémens qu'on veut. Je declare donc que mes pieces doivent être exécutées comme je les ay marquées, et qu'elles ne feront jamais une certaine impression sur les personnes qui ont le gout vray tant qu'on n'observera pas à la lettre tout ce que j'y ay marqué, sans augmentation ni diminution.

28. Philippe Beaussant. *François Couperin*, 288.

The influence of L. Couperin on the harpsichord music of F. Couperin may be observed in the particular genre of the chaconne and passacaglias. L. Couperin's suite collection includes two passacaglias, nine chaconnes, and one piece entitled "Chaconne ou Passacaille." With the exception of his *Passacaglia* in g minor, in continuous variation form, Couperin's favored the rondeau in these genres. While the works are composed in both major and minor keys, they all are in triple meter. A descending tetrachord used as a bass ostinato for the chaconnes and passacaglias, and the rhythmic characteristics of the sarabande which will be further discussed below occur frequently in the chaconnes

The most prominent member of the second generation French keyboard school, F. Couperin expanded the tradition of chaconne and passacaglia and elaborated the rondeau procedure that L. Couperin and Chambonnières had introduced into the keyboard chaconnes and passacaglias.

Analytical Observations on Couperin's Keyboard Passacaglias and Chaconne

François Couperin's chaconne and passacaglia repertoire is as follows: *La Favorite* (chaconne, 1713), *La Passacaille* (passacaglia, 1717), and *L'Amphibie* (passacaglia, 1730). *La Favorite* is in the "Troisiême Ordre" of *Le Premier Livre*, *La Passacaille* is in the "Huitiême Ordre" of *Le second Livre*, and *L'Amphibie* is in the "Vingt-Quatriême Ordre" of *Le Quatriême Livre*.

The Formal Design of Couperin's keyboard Chaconnes and Passacaglias

In the majority of European countries during the Baroque era, chaconne and passacaglia appeared as movements in instrumental suites. Even though they gradually lost their association with the ballroom, chaconne and passacaglia continued to be commonly danced by the French throughout the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century.[34] Largely based on the rondo form, Couperin's chaconnes and passacaglias reflect to a great degree the composer's own compositional development.

Table II:1: Overview of Couperin's chaconne and passacaglias:

F. Couperin (1668-1733)
La favorite in c-minor (1713) -Rondo form -Based on a descending tetrachord ostinato figure
Passacaille in b-minor (1717) -Rondo form -Based on a descending tetrachord ostinato figure
L'Amphibie in A-major (1730) -Hybrid form of rondo and variation -NOT based on any ostinato figure

During the Baroque, the rondeau became popular through the works of the French composers Lully, Chambonnières, and L. Couperin. In the works of these

[34] David Tunley, *Couperin*, 14.

composers, both rondeau (refrain) and couplets are generally eight measures in length and remain in the tonic key, with each section having unique characteristics. Couperin's couplets vary in length from one to eight measures, and the refrain is eight or sixteen measures with a repeat. Both refrain and couplet are typically the same length and in closely related keys.[35]

Traditional rondo characteristics may be found in Couperin's harpsichord pieces *La Favorite* and *La Passacaille*. Rather than emphasizing the aspects of variation in these pieces, Couperin synthesizes the rondo and bass ostinato principles as follows: Refrain-1st Couplet-Refrain-2nd Couplet-Refrain-etc.

An earlier work, Couperin's *La Favorite* (1713), consists of five couplets and a rondeau (refrain). The refrain is four measures in length with repeat, while each couplet varies in length from eight to seventeen measures. The piece remains in c minor throughout. In addition, the couplets are unified by flowing quality and Gravement mood.

The most significant feature in *La Favorite* lies in its idiosyncratic duple meter pattern, a rarity in chaconne and passacaglia, which are most commonly written in triple time.[36] The piece's subtitle, "Chaconne à deux tems" [Chaconne

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[35] Malcolm Cole, "Rondo" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 21, 649-656.

[36] According to Richard Hudson, "the chaconne phrase is usually notated in four bars of meter. Sometimes there are four bars in 3/2. . . or, on rare occasions, two bars in 6/8…On very rare occasions duple meter may occur in French clavecin sources (which may have been influenced by the Spanish duple passacalles) or in brief dances from Germany that do not utilize the ostinato

in duple meter] and descriptive marking "Gravement sans lenteur" [gravely, seriously, without slowness] further reveal the composer's intention. It appears that Couperin's intends *La Favorite* to be played with simple, moderately flowing motion and running eight-note pattern rather than in a faster, dance-like tempo.

Like *La Favorite*, *La Passacaille* in b minor exhibits strong tendencies toward sectionalized rondo form, while the reiterated bass pattern articulates stereotypical characteristics of the passacaglia. A striking feature of this piece is its adherence to strict rondo principles rather than an emphasis on aspects of variation. Rondeau sections carrying the ostinato theme are musically the same throughout, while each couplet varies in length (as in *La Favorite*) and is increasingly developed, either harmonically or rhythmically, as the work progresses towards the middle section.

The tonal structure of the passacaglia conforms to that of the rondo, in which the final statements of the subject and episodes (ABA in ABACABA form) appear in the "home" key. The seventh couplet (mm. 142-150) thus does not modulate, and functions solely as a bridge to the following rondeau. Unlike couplets which modulate to relative keys, the bass motion in the seventh couplet, which consists of an ascending pattern of fifths (B-F$^{\#}$) and fourths (F$^{\#}$-B), outlines in a straightforward fashion the tonic scale, b minor (Table II: 2).

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technique at all." (Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*, vol. 4, xxii-xxiii).

Table II:2: Formal outset of *La Passacaille* in b minor

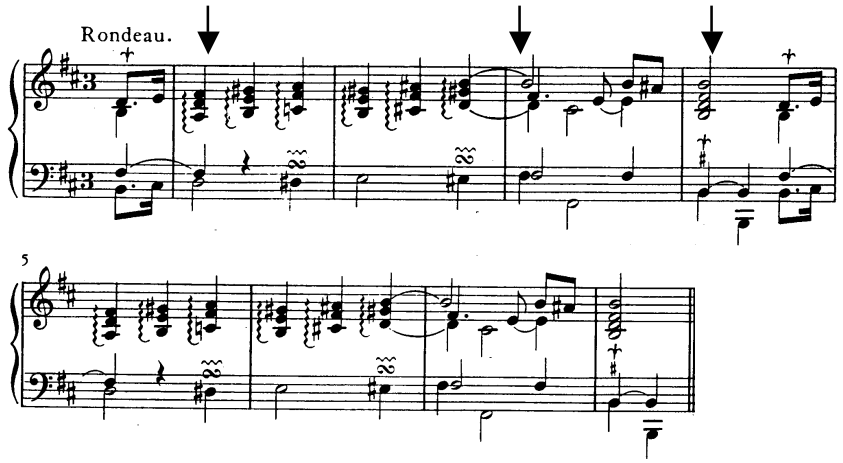
Formal Layouts	Tonal Structure	Tempo/Texture of Couplets
Rondeau	i	Slow/Homophonic
First Couplet	i—v	
Rondeau	i	
Second Couplet	i—III (circle of fifths)	Fast/Imitative
Rondeau	i	
Third Couplet	i—v (same as in the 1st couplet)	
Rondeau	i	
Fourth Couplet	i—III	
Rondeau	i	
Fifth Couplet	i—III	Slow/Homophonic
Rondeau	i	
Sixth Couplet	i—III	Gradual rhythmic acceleration
Rondeau	i	
Seventh Couplet	i (no modulation)	
Rondeau	i	
Eighth Couplet	i	
Rondeau	i	

As indicated by Table II: 2, in *La Passacaille,* each couplet alternates homophonic and imitative characteristics. The rondeau (refrain) section marks a striking chromatic ascending bass line (B-$C^{\#}$-D-$D^{\#}$-E-$E^{\#}$-$F^{\#}$). It is interesting to note the ways in which *La Passacaille* seems to reflect the characteristic moods, voicings, rhythmic figures, and tempi of the French overture (a popular genre in

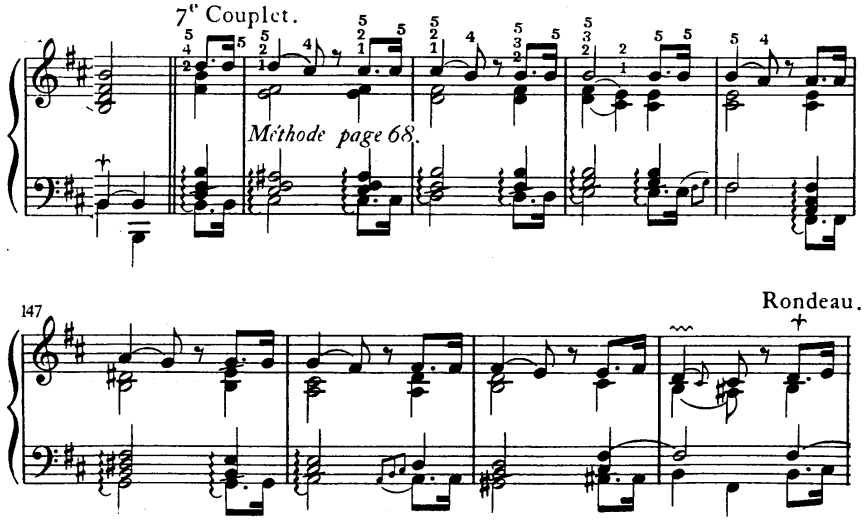
the first half of the seventeenth century).[37] In addition, Couperin's use of dotted rhythmic figuration throughout maximizes the work's musical intensity. Instances of the short but characteristic dotted rhythm can be traced to the beginning of the rondeau and the second, fourth, sixth and seventh couplets. In addition to its highly developed outer-voice frame, *La Passacaille*'s four- and occasionally five-voice texture, a procedure common to French overture, provides an especially rich texture. Such a case may be seen in the first beat of mm. 1 and 4, and seventh couplet, which begins in five-voices (Example II:1).

[37] Eugene Wolf describes the French overture: "In France, overtures were of specific sort consisting of two parts: first a stately slow section in duple meter with pervasive dotted rhythms, then s faster fugal section, usually in triple meter or compound meter. A return near the end of the second section to the style and often the material of the opening is common, especially in later examples. Double-dotting is expected in the opening section; this section ends on (or in) the dominant or relative major, and both sections are repeated in toto. Hence, the form represents a type of binary or rounded binary form with contrasting parts. . . The French overture remained the standard type in France during the reign of Louis XIV and was quickly adopted by composers in England and elsewhere" (Eugene Wolf, "Overture." *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 602-603.

Example II:1. *La Passacaille*, mm. 1 and 4, and seventh couplet mm. 1 and 4.



Seventh Couplet



Implied differences in tempi between the rondeau and couplet (although not indicated as literal tempo markings) serve as further evidence for the stylistic connections of Couperin's passacaglia to the French overture. The characteric tempo organization in the French overture is outlined as slow (homophonic in a five-voice texture)—fast (fugato-like)—slow. The first rondeau, the first couplet, and the return of the rondeau may be considered equivalent to the first slow section in the French overture in that the three sections (rondeau-couplet-rondeau) have a homophonic texture and occasional instances of five-voice texture, as in the French overture. In addition, the second, third and fourth couplets present a fugue-like idea. While there is no literal tempo change, the progression of a dotted rhythm followed by sixteenth, thirty-second, sixty-fourth, and one-hundred-twenty-eighth notes, creates a perceived tempo change. Interestingly, the fifth couplet recalls a return to the slow movement in the French overture. Tempo indications and slower rhythmic values signal a return to this slow section. As in previous couplets, Couperin indicates allusions to tempo change through alternate means, this time by marking *Mouvement marqué* in the fifth couplet and the exclusive use of quarter notes.

The remainder of the piece—the sixth couplet to the end—offers an impression of a tempo acceleration towards the culminating couplet. The sixth couplet has an imitative idea with a dotted rhythmic gesture, while the seventh

couplet has dense harmonic structure and voicing, with phrase length reduced to eight bars. In the eighth couplet, Couperin maximizes the climactic effects with a series of fast running sixteenth-note figurations. Wilfred Mellers' description of the passage confirms our observation: "each couplet adds to the intensity. . . even until a shattering climax is reached the seventh couplet with its great spread discords, and anguished suspension percussively exploiting the whole range of the instrument."[38] While the returning refrain functions in opposition to the allusion to French overture form, an analogy with that form can provide an interesting overall shape to this set of variations.

Unlike the two earlier works, *L'Amphibie* (1730), Couperin's last piece in this genre, seems to be an experimental piece in formal structure and applies many descriptive words much like the descriptive indications similar to those later employed in character pieces of the Romantic period.

Noblement, mouvement de Passacaille [nobly]
Coulé [flowing]
Gayment [gaily]
Modérément [moderate, moderately]
Vivement [fast, lively, vigorously]
Afectueusement [with intensity, passionately]
Plus marqué [more decisively]
Noblement [nobly]

[38] Wilfrid Mellers. *Francois Couperin and the French Classical Tradition*, London: Faber and Faber (1987), 192-193.

Neumann suggests that "[T]he French, more often than the Italians, used terms that often define feelings, attitudes, and moods rather than an abstract speed. F. Couperin uses terms such as *noblement, audacieusement, languissament, voluptueusement sans langueur,* and *nonchalamment*, evoking with striking eloquence a musical character that often defines the proper tempo more tangibly than any speed word could."[39]

As the title suggests,[40] *L'Amphibie* is a hybrid form of rondo and rondo variation wherein the design and even harmonic progressions differ greatly from the traditional French passacaglia. This piece is less characteristic of passacaglia and chaconne than the two examined earlier, and its structure, while not precisely a rondo form, contains marked similarities to rondo. Indeed, the formal ambiguity between the rondo and passacaglia is one primary manifestation of the character ambiguity denoted by the title, "the amphibious one." An outline of the formal structure of *L'Amphibie* is as follows (Table II:3):

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[38] Frederick Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, New York: Schirmer Books (1993), 65.

[40] Beaussant explains the etymology of the word: "in the seventeenth century, *L'Amphibie* was used to describe a man who underwent a metamorphosis of sorts when he flitted from one idea to another or expressed contrary sentiment in quick succession." Thus, the piece suggests several levels of ambiguous characters. (Philippe Beaussant, *François Couperin*, 330).

Table II:3: An Outline of the formal structure of *L'Amphibie*

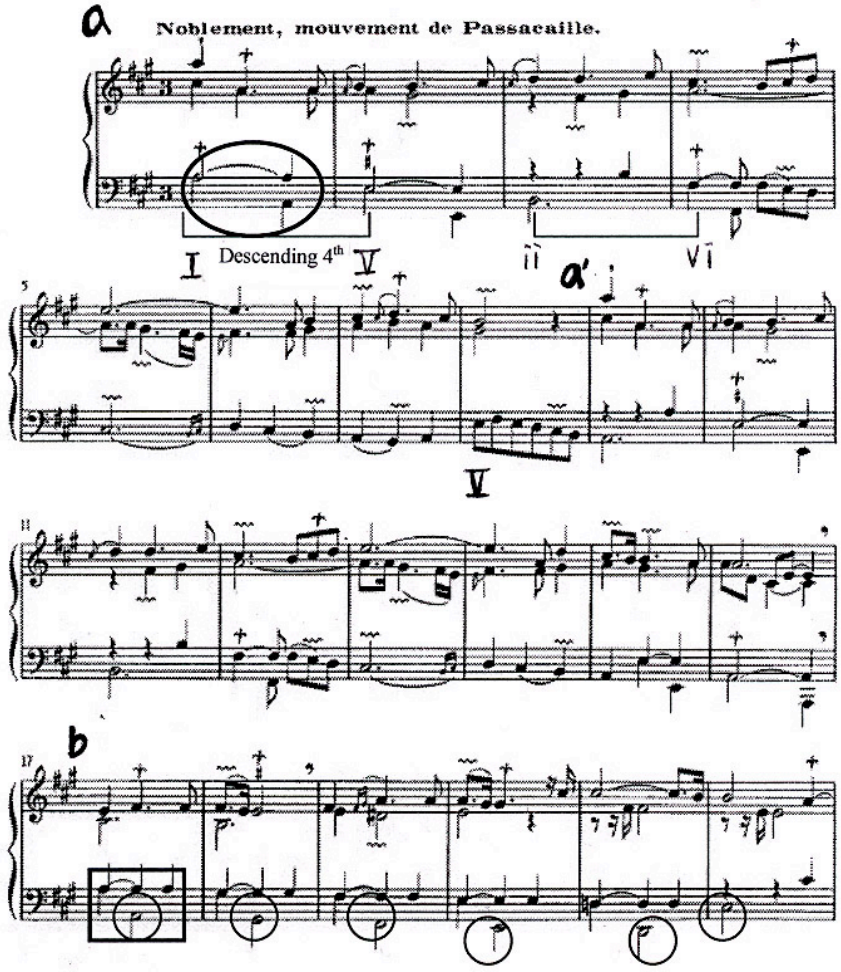
Large-Scale Formal Layouts	Detail Form	Measure Numbers	Keys
A (Homophonic Texture)	a (a + a´) b (b + b´) c d	mm. 1-16 mm. 17-32 mm. 33-40 mm. 41-48	A-major
B (Contrapuntal Texture)	-motives and large- scale stepwise motion, mainly derived from section A -continuous variation with temporary modulation	mm. 50-141	a-C-a-[d-a-e-b]-a A-major
A´ (Homophonic Texture)	a	mm. 142-157	A-major

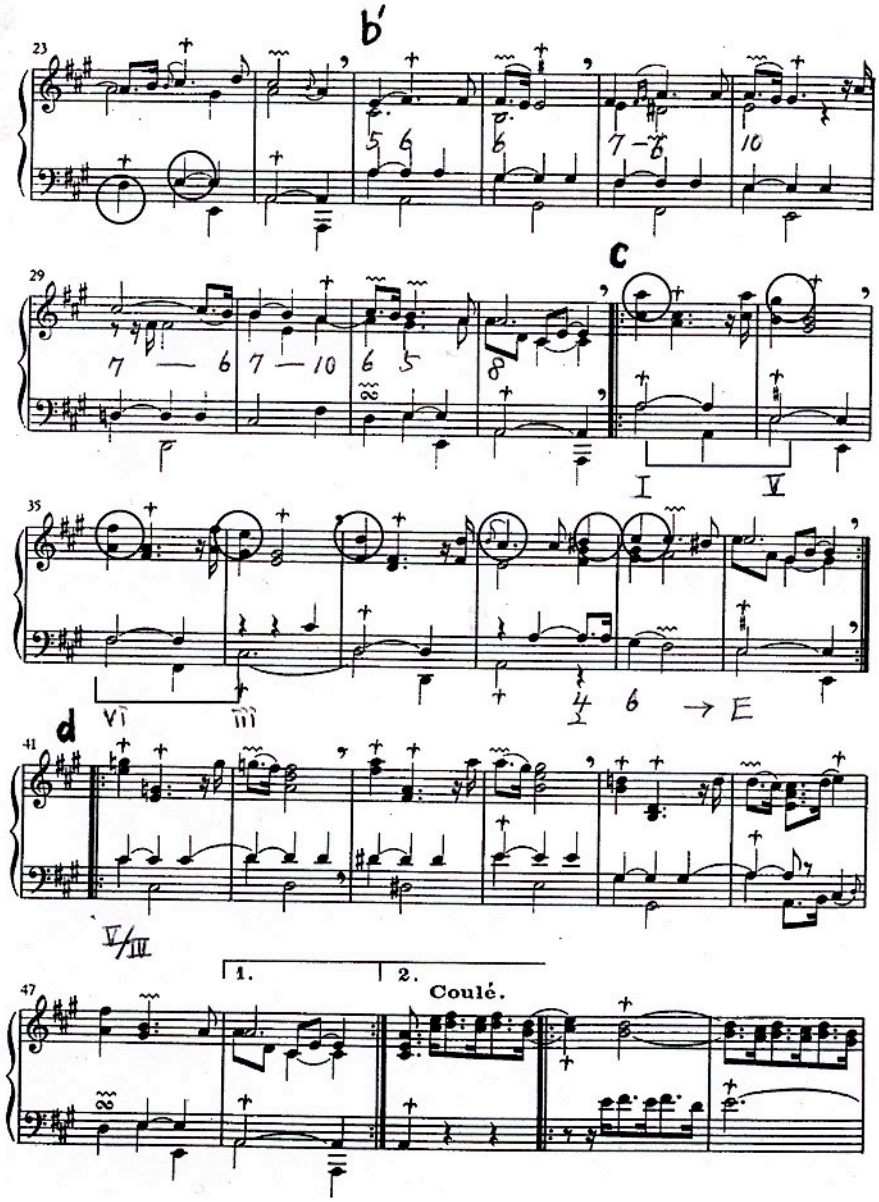
The basic formal structure may be divided into three sections, ABA´. The A section is homophonic in texture while section B is imitative. The last A´ section repeats the first part of section A.

Section A (mm. 1-48), marked *Noblement, mouvement de Passacaille*, is governed by ostinato principles. The opening in mm. 1-32 presents two pairs of two phrases, the second pair a variation of the first (a a´ b b´). The bass pattern of a (mm. 1-16) and c (mm. 33-40) are based on a (𝅗𝅥 ♩) rhythm pattern in the I-V-ii-vi harmonic progression by a descending fourth, while phrases *b* (mm. 17-32) and *d* (mm. 41-49) are based on a (♩♩) rhythmic pattern by stepwise progression. While based on the same rhythmic pattern throughout, phrases *c* and *d* have a contrasting bass pattern. These two phrases, *c* and *d*, also share characteristics with both phrases *a* and *b*: the octave displacement of the beginning of *a* (found in

c as well as *d*), the ascending scalewise motion of the beginning of *a* (found in the alto toward the end of *c* and in the bass line of *d*), and the descending scalewise motion in the bass of *b* (found in the melody of *c*). Couperin used these characteristics to create melodic unity between *a*+*b* and *c*+*d* (Example II:2).

Example II:2: Section A of *L'Amphibie*

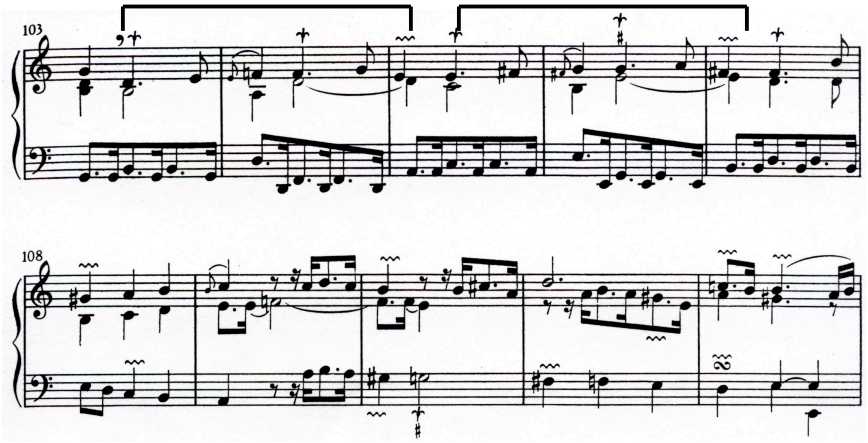




As compared to section A, the middle section (B) is based on contrapuntal texture, and consists of material that derives but departs greatly from the main

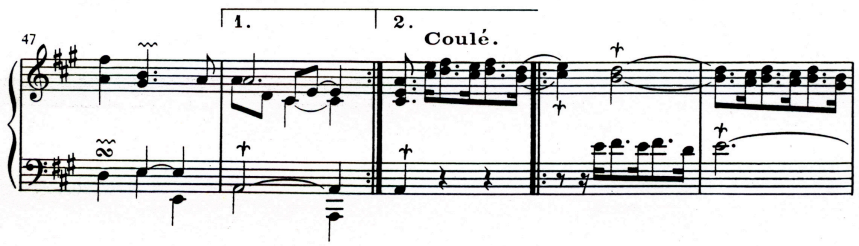
theme in terms of both melodic shape and bass pattern. Characteristics of motivic material and sequential modulations can clearly be seen in mm. 103-112 (Example II:3).

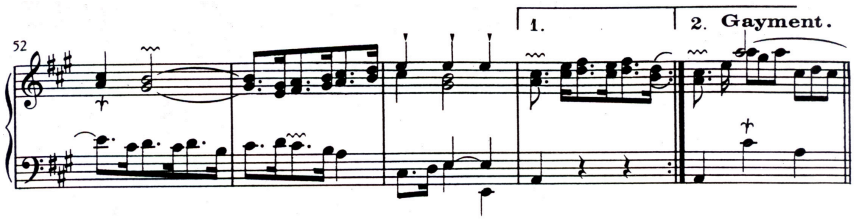
Example II:3: Sequential modulation in *L'Amphibie*



Such a harmonic progression, only marginally fulfilling the conditions for which the piece may be regarded as a passacaglia, is often threatened, as can be seen in mm. 49-55 (Example II:4).

Example II:4: Obscured harmonic progression in *L'Amphibie* (harmony becomes static on the tonic)





Ultimately, the most distinctive aspect of this work is the contrast between section A and B, in which Couperin accomplishes not only the unity by motive and same harmonic pattern but also the contrast among small sections by modified rhythmic pattern. This formal dualism may be understood as ambiguity latent in the domain of the structure, thus while the last A´ section repeats the first part of section A, it may be considered as a cross between rondo and passacaglia. In this way, François Couperin creates a "bizarre" formal anomaly conforming to neither a classical rondo nor a strict continuous variation.

Expansion of phrase structure is another important development of Couperin's compositional career. Refrains of Couperin's earlier pieces, *La Favorite* and *La Passacaille*, consist of a four-measure phrase, a complete harmonic unit typical of the chaconne and passacaglia, with the rondeau having a repeated phrase structure (Figure II:1). The main melody in mm. 1-16 of *L'Amphibie*, by contrast, reflects a Classical phrase design, with a parallel period—an antecedent phrase and a consequent phrase—appearing in all sections.

The bass ostinato harmonic pattern, I-V-ii-vi, is infiltrated into this symmetrical phrase structure (Figure II:2).

Figure II:1: Phrase construction of refrain of *La Favorite* and *La Passacaille*

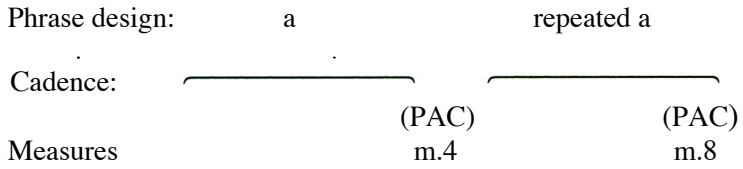
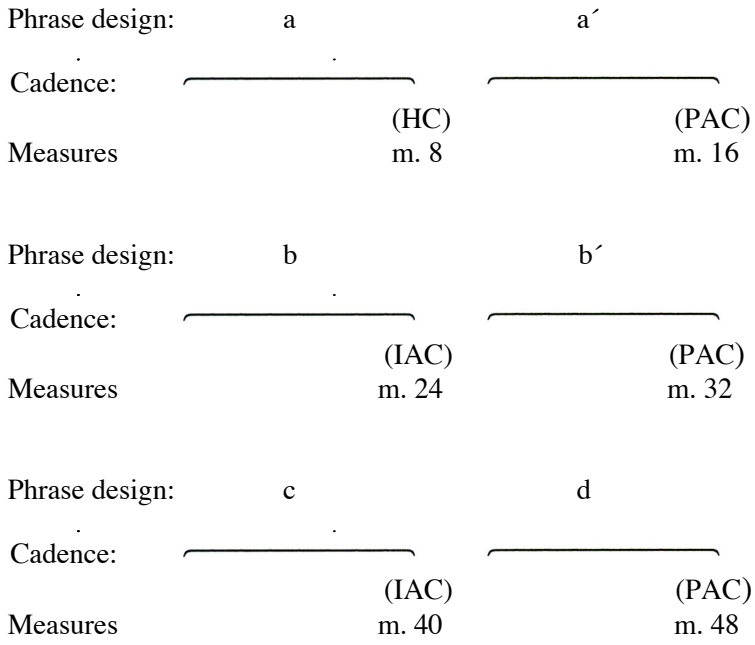


Figure II:2: Phrase construction of the first three sections of *L'Amphibie*



We could draw the conclusion that François Couperin espoused common musical trends of that time by preferring Classical formal structure, where an antecedent and consequent pair articulates a complete period. We thus see in Couperin's work musical principles that later become standard features of the Classical rondo form. This idea is supported by the fact that this piece, although labeled "mouvement de Passacaille," is less obviously a passacaglia than Couperin's other works with that genre-label. The contrast between ground bass principles and quasi-classical rondo procedures is one of the wonderfully "amphibious" elements of this piece. This also supports observations made by Beaussant (see footnote 40).

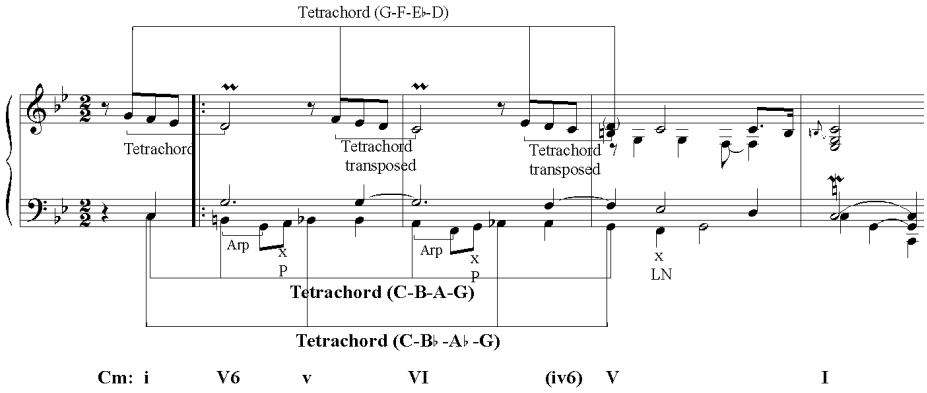
Motive and Imitation in Couperin's Chaconnes and Passacaglias

Passacaglia and chaconne are both characterized as continuous variations on repeated musical elements such as a brief harmonic pattern and a descending tetrachord pattern. Composers developed these improvised bass patterns into a more polished style by combining them with eighteenth-century concepts of motive and phrase structure.

Many of the Couperin's couplets demonstrate his interest in imitative technique. His varied use of motivic ideas, furthermore, is saturated in a polished contrapuntal manner: the four-note kernel, which serves as a primary motive in the piece, appears at multiple levels of structure. In particular, *La Favorite*

exhibits a network of motivic saturation, as mentioned earlier. The motive—a descending tetrachord—has a dual function: two descending tetrachords (C-B-A-G and C-B^{b}-A^{b}-G) are embedded in the rondo as a chromatic bass-line motive (Example II:5).

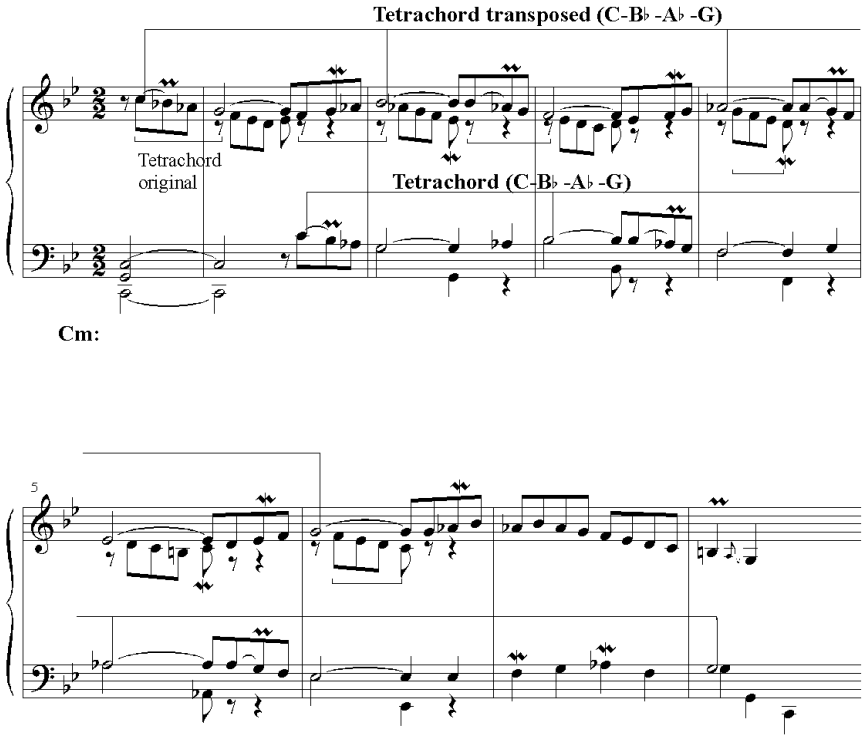
Example II:5: Web of tetrachord motives in the opening of *La Favorite*



Each member of the tetrachord (C-B-B^{b}-A-A^{b}-G), with the exception of the first and last notes, contains embellishments such as arpeggios and passing tones which create musical interest in the bass. Couperin's attempts toward motivic saturation continue in the top voice, where we see yet another four-note pattern, this time at a different pitch level. In addition, each member of the pattern has a corresponding element in two separate lower-level four-note patterns, thus reflecting Couperin's strong interest in motivic coherence.

The first couplet is also saturated with four-note motivic ideas. Similar tetrachord motives appear in each couplet, contributing to an even greater unification of the piece. The descending tetrachord is presented in the soprano voice at the outset (mm. 5-11). The motive of the rondeau (G-F-E^b-D) appears transposed to another scale degree (in mm. 5-6, C-B^b-A^b-G). In the first couplet, this motive emerges in the tenor part and as both ascending and descending patterns in the alto and soprano parts (see brackets, Example II: 6). On a large scale, the four-note pattern is embedded in the top voice as in the rondo. Interestingly, the soprano melody is imitated in the tenor part. As can be seen in Example II: 6, the first four notes of the pattern in the tenor imitate closely that of the soprano melody, however this time with a slight variation. In this way, it is as if Couperin creates a musical dialogue between the two voices (Example II:6).

Example II:6: *La Favorite*, motivic network of mm. 5-13

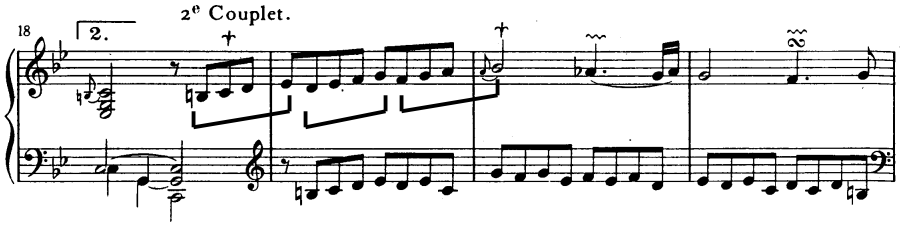


The four-note pattern continues as an ascending sequential figuration in the second and fifth couplets (see Example II:7). In this way, the motivic idea continues to be explored, this time in a more subtle fashion. The left hand follows the four-note sequential pattern by imitation. The running eighth-note figure in the fifth couplet (mm. 68-84) increases the intensity and reaches to the highest range in the piece, which could be interpreted in several ways: as a preparation for the

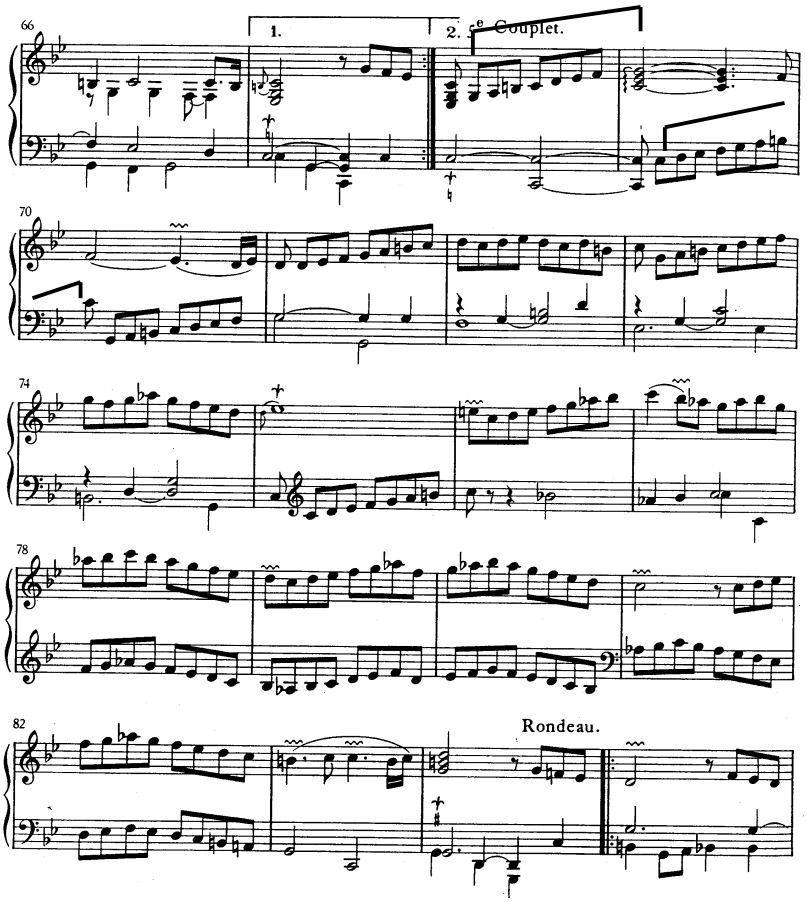
return of the main rondo melody; as a sort of development; or as an intensified approach to a climax before a moment of recapitulation.

Example II:7: *La Favorite*, second and fifth couplet

Second Couplet

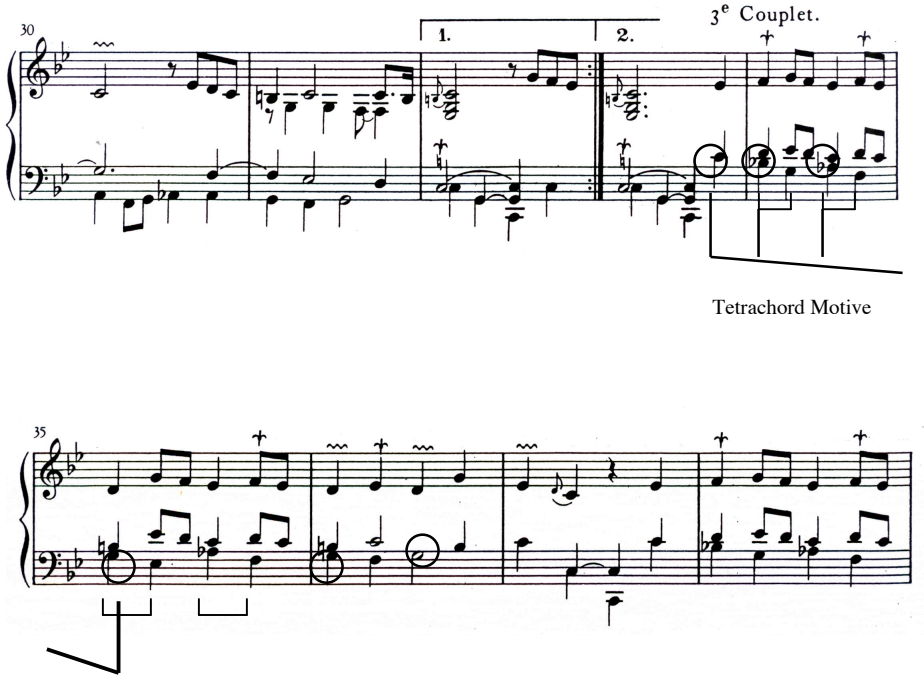


Fifth Couplet



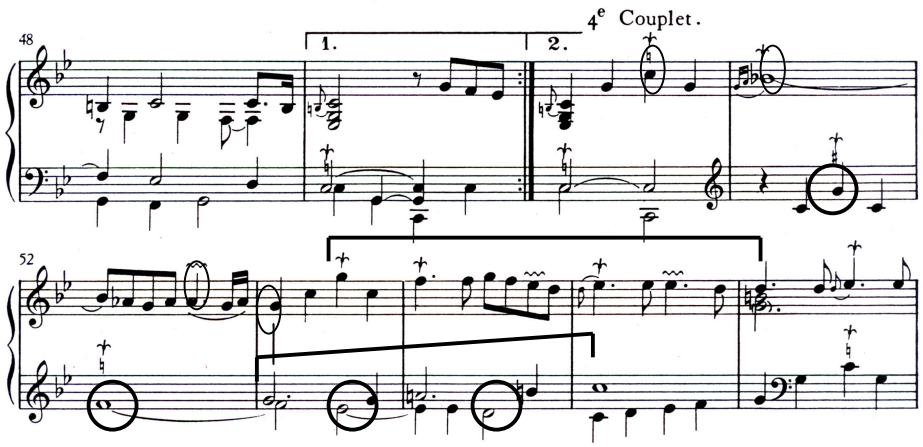
A comparison of this four-note pattern in the third couplet to the motive of the rondeau reveals an elegant approach to Couperin's handling of the motive. The four-note pattern, C-B^{b}-A^{b}-G, is elaborated through the arpeggiation in the bass. The second member of the tetrachord, B^{b}, skips down a minor 3rd to G, and then returns to A^{b}. The procedure is then repeated on A^{b}. The goal of G serves as an axis of the double neighbor-note motion, G-A^{b}-G-F-C (Example II:8), each having an arpeggiated pattern of descending thirds. The motive remains intact during the modulation process from C minor to E^{b} major.

Example II:8: *La Favorite*, tetrachord motive in the third couplet, mm. 33-37



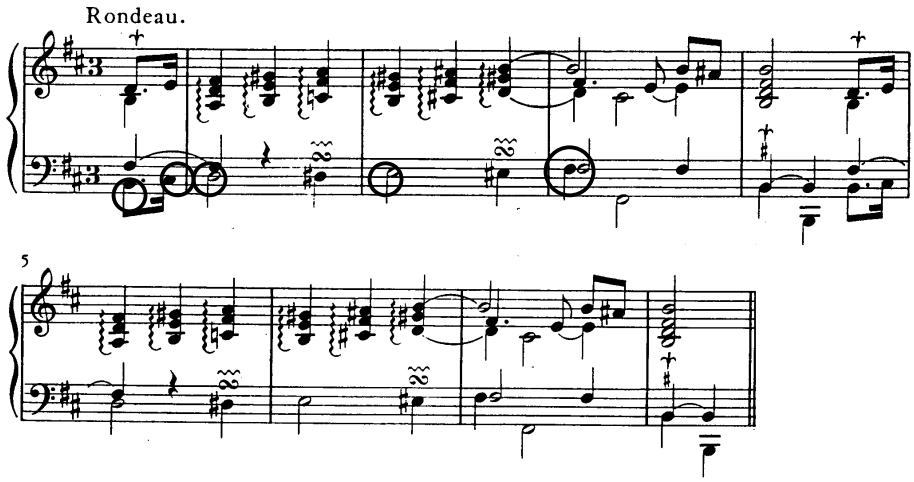
The new thematic shape emerges in the fourth couplet and the tetrachord motive is concealed in an artistic way and is subject to imitation. While a long chain of suspensions elaborates the bass motive, an ascending tetrachord, G-A-B-C, appears in the tenor (mm. 53-55). At the end of the fourth couplet, another descending tetrachord pattern, C-B^{b}-A^{b}-G, emerges in the bass (Example II:9).

Example II:9: *La Favorite*, beginning of fourth couplet



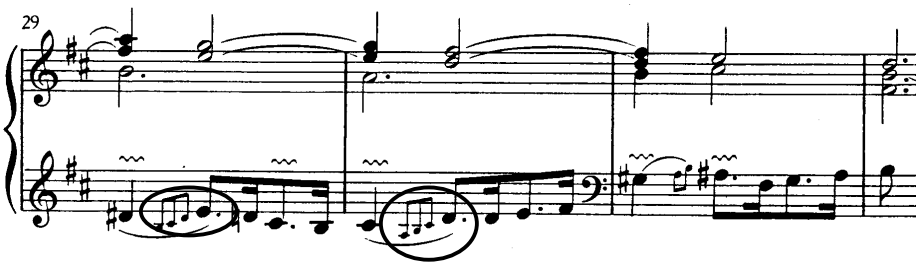
In *La Passacaille*, Couperin uses as a central characteristic a chromatic ascending bass line, B-$C^{\#}$-D-$D^{\#}$-E-$E^{\#}$-$F^{\#}$. In contrast to the earlier piece of the same genre, in which simple diatonic descending patterns serve as a point of departure for further development, *La Passacaille* presents the chromatic ostinato pattern in the bass by embellishing the ascending minor scale, B-$C^{\#}$-D-E-$F^{\#}$, from the beginning (Example II:10).

Example II:10: *La Passacaille*, opening rondeau

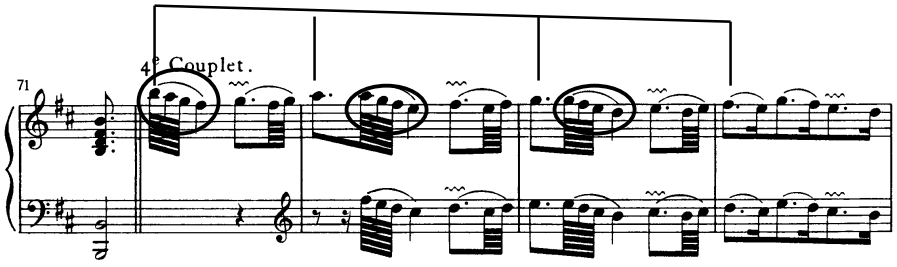


The ascending bass pattern functions not only as an ornament expressing mood (mm. 29-33, Example II: 11), but also as precise rhythmic pattern by which to intensify mood and alter the direction of descending four-note pattern (mm. 71-74, Example II:12).

Example II:11: *La Passacaille*, ascending bass intensification, mm. 29-33.



Example II:12: *La Passacaille*, descending intensification of the ostinato Figure, mm. 71-74



Couperin attempted to unify the piece through various uses of the motivic idea such as an ornamentation, long melody with different rythmic patterns, and imitation idea between two voices. It is important to recognize the various ways in which Couperin's motivic ideas govern his pieces.

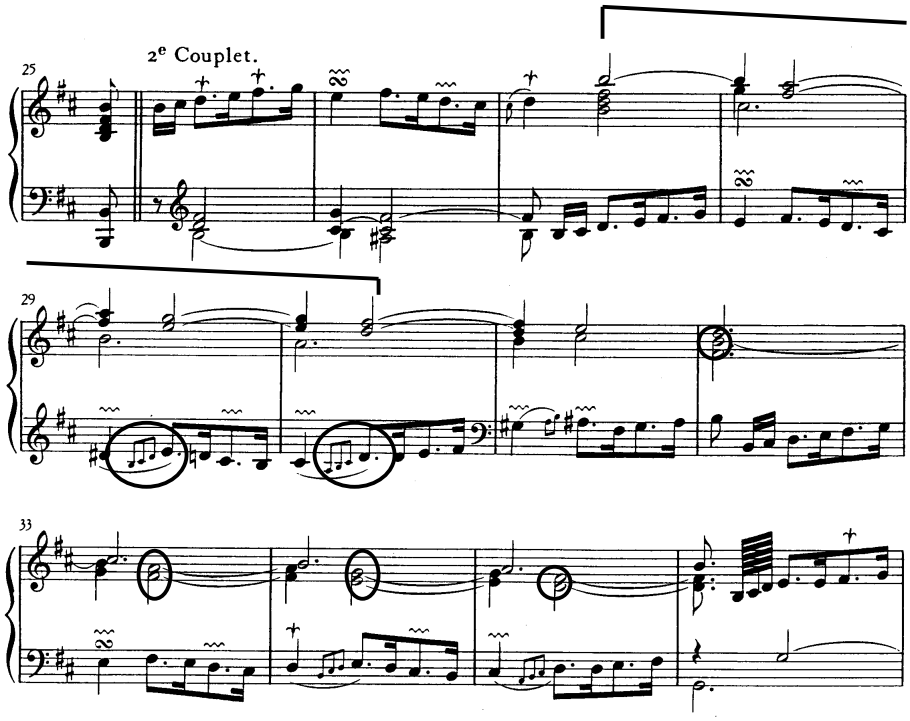
The Characteristic of Sarabande

The final characteristic to be discussed in these three works are those of sarabande. The sarabande is a dance in triple meter, whose second beat is lengthened (♩♩. ♪). Hudson states: "All four forms [Folia, Sarabande, Passacaglia, and Chaconne] were subjected in France to a severe slowing of tempo, and all four were finally characterized by majestic triple rhythm in which the dotted second-beat received a heavy accent."[41]

[41] Richard Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne*, vol. 1, xiii.

The various means by which Couperin stretches the second beat are noteworthy: Using one method, he extends the second beat by a dotted quarter note and a trill. Couperin thus creates the stereotypical rhythmic feature of the passacaglia. This may be seen in *Passacaille* in b minor and *L'Amphibie* throughout. Using another method, he incorporates a "chain of suspensions" which resolves on the second beat. In this way, Couperin achieves an expressive effect and presents sarabande characteristics using suspension and ornamentation by four-note motivic figuration. The second Couplet of *Passacaille* in b minor demonstrates this characteristic clearly (Example II:13).

Example II:13: *La Passacaille*, second couplet



Through the genre of chaconne and passacaglia, we may thus obtain a better understanding of F. Couperin' compositional development between 1713 to 1730. Couperin's extensive use of the rondo form, descending tetrachord pattern, and extension of the second beat in his passacaglia and chaconne is in line with contemporary musical trends. One sees in Couperin's work his great ability in handling motivic ideas and developing formal structure. That is to say, F. Couperin accomplishes contrast and unification simultaneously in his work by the use of harmonic and textural contrast and rhythmic and motivic manipulation. Thus, each of Couperin's three ground-bass pieces has a very distinctive character, giving the impression that the individual piece could be played independently from the suite as a separate entity.

Chapter 3: The Life and Music of Fischer and His Keyboard Chaconnes and Passacaglias

Fischer's Life and Music

According to recent research, Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer was born presumably in 1656 in Schönfeld (in the Egerland region of Bohemia, south-west of Karlsbad).[42] Although details of Fischer's life and musical development are unclear and vary according to different authors, it is believed, based on extant documents regarding his children's baptism records, that Fischer was a Catholic. In addition, the date of Fischer's first publication, *Le Journal du Printemps* (1695), and the date of his death (1748, Rastatt) are also documented.[43] Fischer attended the Piarist grammar school where he may have had a good musical education. Possible music instructors include Augustin Pfleger, Georg Bleyer (1647-1683)[44], and/or Christoph Bernhard (1628-1692, a pupil of Heinrich Schütz and the Kapellmeister of the Elector of Saxony). In the 1680s, Fischer began

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[42] These biographical notes are based on Rudolf Walter "Fischer, Johann Caspar Ferdinand" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 8: 893-896; and Gerald Hambitzer, "Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer," trans. by Clive Williams, Verlag Dohr Köln, 2001 (http://www.dohr.de/author/fischer.htm), accessed on September 15, 2002.

[43] Franz Ludwig, "Neue Forschungen über den Markgräflich badischen Hofkapellmeister Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer," *Mitteilungen des Vereines für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen*, XLIX Jg. (1911), pp. 71-78 [Cited in Plotinsky, Anita. H. "The Keyboard Music of Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer," (Ph.D. Diss., City University of New York, 1978), 2)].

[44] Georg Bleyer belonged to the orchestra in Schlackenwerth around 1683 and was interestingly the first German composer who used French dances in the style of Lully. See Manfred Schuler, "Zum leben und Wirken Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischers," in J. C. F. Fischer in seiner Zeit. Tagungsbericht Rastatt 1988, ed. By Ludwig Finscher. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang (1994), 16.

serving as Kapellmeister in Schlackwerth, followed by appointment as *Hofkapellmeister* to Margrave Ludwig Wilhelm of Baden in 1690.

Fischer's most significant musical influence came from Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687). While there is no evidence that Fischer had the opportunity to study with Lully, Fischer may have studied Lully's music at the Schlackwerth court, Prague and at Schloß Raudnitz on the river Elbe, as well. Lully's music was well known among the musicians in Prague, largely due to the influence of Georg Muffat (1653-1704). Lully's printed music scores are contained in the library in Schloß Raudnitz.[45]

Fischer's works may be divided into four categories: orchestra, keyboard, theatre, and Catholic sacred music. His first publication, *Le Journal du Printemps* (1695), is an orchestral piece consisting of eight suites and largely reflects Lully's influence. None of the theatre works have survived, and the eight surviving masses demonstrate "a high degree of contrapuntal skill in strettos, inversions, augmentations, diminutions, double counterpoint and so on."[46] In addition, there are four sets of Fischer's keyboard works.

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[45] Hambitzer, "Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer." See also, Rudolf Walter, *Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang (1990), 53.

[46] Rudolf Walter, "Fischer, Johann Caspar Ferdnand" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 8: 893-896.

Brief Overview of Fischer's Keyboard Music

Fischer wrote two sets of harpsichord works, the *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* (1696, 1698) and the *Musikalischer Parnassus* (1738) and two sets of organ works, *Praeludia et Fugae per 8 tonos ecclesiasticos* and *Ariadne musica Neo-Organoedum* (1702). According to Walter, both collections for harpsichord exemplify "the French ballet suite transferred to a keyboard instrument."[47] Fischer's organ collection *Ariadne musica Neo-Organoedum* consists of 20 preludes and fugues based on equal temperament and is considered historically significant by several authors.[48] In addition, several of the themes from the *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* and *Ariadne musica* are used by Johann Sebastian Bach in *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier.* For example, Fischer's *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein,* Prelude No. 6 (mm. 4, 26-28, and 8-9) and Bach's *Wohltemperierte Clavier*, I, Prelude B^b Major (mm. 1, 8-9 and 9-20); Fischer's *Ariadne Musica,* Fugue No. 5 and Bach's *Wohltemperierte Clavier*, I, Fugue No. 16; *Ariadne Musica,* Fugue No. 8 and *Wohltemperierte Clavier*, II,

[47] Rudolf Walter, "Fischer, Johann Caspar Ferdnand" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 8: 894.
[48] *Ibid*., and Vivian Chiu, "What Bach Borrowed from J. K. F. Fischer," (*Clavier*, October, 1994), 28-32.

Fugue No. 9; *Ariadne Musica*, Prelude No. 2 and *Wohltemperierte Clavier*, I, Prelude No. 22, etc.[49]

Les Pièces de Clavessin (1696) consists of eight suites and was reprinted as the *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* (A little bunch of musical flowers) in 1698. Unlike other Baroque composers, Fischer creates his own arrangement for each suite. All of Fischer's suites begin with a Praeludium, but the type and order of dances that follow (Ballet, Canaries, Branle, Plainte, and so on) vary. Only one suite No. 6 in D major from *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* follows the "standard" allemande-courante-sarabande-gigue sequence, but even this suite contains additional dances. Fischer's suites vary in length from two to ten movements. Suite no. 8, for example, contains just two movements, Praeludium and Chaconne. Like many keyboard composers of the time, Fischer provided an ornamentation table at the beginning of his collection.

In 1738, nearly forty years following the publication of these suites, Fischer published his second collection of harpsichord works, the *Musikalischer Parnassus* containing nine suites and serveral free-form pieces, variously called Praeludium, Ouverture, Toccatina, Tastada, Harpeggio, or Toccata. Each suite in this collection is named after one of the nine muses (Clio, Calliope, Melpomene, etc). As in the *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein*, Fischer prefers to insert various

[49] Chiu, "What Bach Borrowed from J. K. F. Fischer," and Consoella Phelps, *The Keyboard Works of Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer (ca. 1665-1746)*, Master Thesis, University of Washington, 1973, 146-147.

optional dances among the standard dance movements and provides an alternative pair of Minuets in all suites, with the exception of No. 5, Erato. Interestingly, non-dance movements such as "March," "Combattement," and "Air de triumphans" were used in the suite No. 8, Polymnia.[50]

While Froberger had established a standard suite "core" of Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue, Fischer preferred alternative orderings. Gerald Hambitzer evaluates Fischer as "the first composer in the German-speaking countries to use many of the French dances made fashionable by Lully (ballet, bourrée, gavotte, menuet, passepied etc.) in his keyboard works."[51] Fischer was the first to depart from Froberger's standard, thus refining the tradition of the French suite and paving the way for Muffat.[52]

Most movements in these two collections (with the exception of the aria and variations in the suite no.5 of *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein*, chaconnes, and passacaglias) are in binary form and the harmonic structure is largely based on a tonic-dominant relationship.

While there is no documentary evidence regarding a direct influence of Muffat and Kerll on Fischer's chaconnes and passacaglias, Kerll's *Ciacona* in C major (n. d.) and *Passacaglia* in d minor (n. d.), and Muffat's *Ciacona* in G major

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[50] Rudolf Walter calls these three movements "character pieces." (Walter, "Fischer, Johann Caspar Ferdnand" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 8: 893-896.)
[51] Gerald Hambitzer, "Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer."
[52] Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer, *Sämtliche Werke für Klavier und Orgel*, ed. By Ernst V. Werra, New York: Broude Brothers, 1965, viii.

and *Passacaglia* in g minor from the *Apparatus musico-organiticus* (1690) have many characteristics in common with Fischer's compositions.[53] Kerll and Muffat's compositional styles bear some similarities, most notably the way in which the two composers treated the genre independently, that is, not as part of a suite. In addition, the two composers composed chaconnes in the major mode and passacaglias in the minor mode and used triple meter for both genres.

Kerll's chaconne was the earliest example of the genre in South Germany. The chaconne is based on two-measure units and follows the harmonic pattern I-vi-I, while the passacaglia, written in continuous variation form, is based on four-measure descending tetrachord pattern, D-C-B^{b}-A. Muffat's ciacona and passacaglia differ slightly from those of Kerll. The ciacona consists of twelve numbered variations based on the modified bass melody pattern I-V-I. Muffat's passacaglia combines a modified bass ostinato pattern with rondeau form. His g-minor passacaglia in particular seems to have influenced Fischer's early passacaglia. Muffat's self-evaluation as a pioneer who introduced the French style into German lands,[54] bears proof in his ciacona, which frequently employs dotted

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[53] The earlist known original source of Kerll's Ciaccona is MS. 5270 of the Bibliothek der Hochschule für Musikerziehung und Kirchenmusik in Berlin. Dated 1675, this MS, now lost, is discussed by Riedel in Quellenkundliche Beiträge, 78-79 (Cited in Bates. "The Passacaglia and Ciaconna in German Keyboard Music of the Baroque Period," 28-29).

[54] Susan Wollenberg, "Muffat, Georg." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 17: 361. Note that Wollenberg suggests Muffat as a pioneer in this style, while Werra (see note 52) credits Fischer with influencing Muffat; since these composers were contemporary, either scenario is feasible.

rhythms characteristic of the French overture. Furthermore, his passacaglia exhibits *stile brisé* (broken texture style), the characteristic of French lute music.

Analytical Observations on Fischer's Keyboard Passacaglias and Chaconnes

Fischer composed two passacaglias and four chaconnes for the harpsichord, contained in the harpsichord suite collections *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* (1696) and *Musikalischer Parnassus* (1738). These works comprise: *Passacaille* in a-minor, the second movement of suite III, from the *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* (1696); and *Passacaglia* in d minor, the last movement of the last suite "Uranie" from the *Musikalischer Parnassus* (1738); *Chaconne* in G-major, the second movement of suite VIII from *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein*; *Chaconne* in a-minor, the fifth movement of suite "Melpomene,"; *Chaconne* e-minor, the third movement of suite "Erato,"; *Chaconne* in F-major, the last movement of suite "Euterpe." The last three chaconnes are from *Musikalischer Parnassus*.

The Formal Design of Fischer's Chaconnes and Passacaglias

In Comparing the characteristics of Couperin's chaconnes and passacaglias with those of his contemporary, Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, it is apparent that Fischer, like Couperin, synthesizes the formal procedures of rondo and continuous variation with the ostinato principle. Most of his keyboard

chaconnes and passacaglias are in continuous variation form, with the exception of the *Passacaille* in a-minor, which is in a rondo form (ABACADA). William Bates evaluates Fischer's *Passacaille* in a-minor as a significant piece in that it is the "only composition in the entire German Baroque keyboard repertoire of passacaglias and ciaccones to feature an unaltered application of French rondeau procedure."[55]

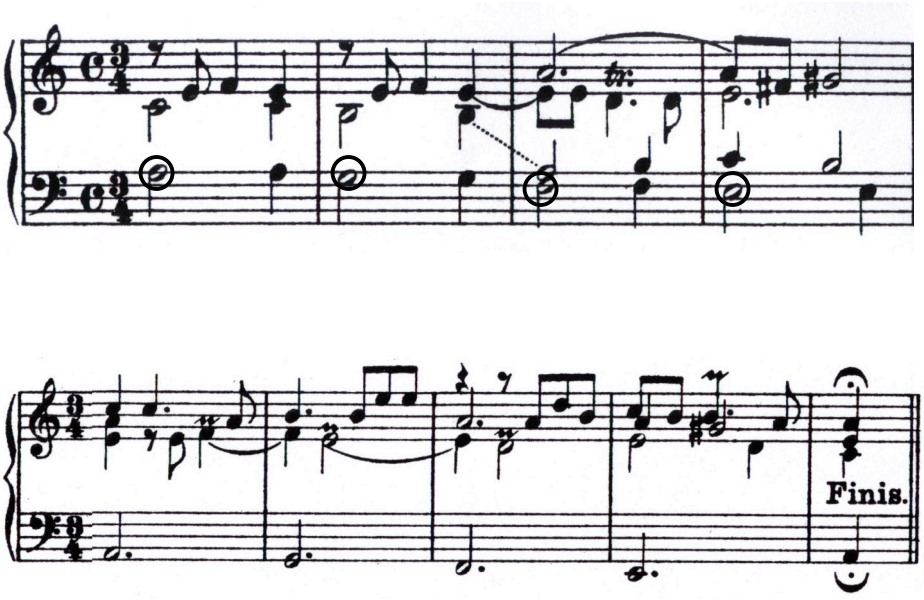
Table III:1: Overview of Fischer's harpsichord chaconnes and passacaglias:

J. C. F. Fischer (1665-1746)	
Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein (1696, 1698)	***Musikalischer Parnassus*** (1738)
Pasacaille in a-minor - Rondo form - Based on a descending tetrachord ostinato figure	***Chaconne*** in a-minor - Continuous variation form - Based on a descending tetrachord ostinato figure
Chaconne in G-major - Continuous variation in three parts (G - g - G) - Based on a descending tetrachord ostinato figure	***Chaconne*** in e-minor - Continuous variation form - NOT based on an ostinato figure, but on a I to V progression
	Chaconne in F-major - Continuous variation in three key areas (F – C – F) - Ostinato derived from a stepwise descending pattern
	Passacaglia in d-minor - Continuous variation in four key area (d – F – a – d) - The ostinato recurs in modified formats

[55] Bates, "The Passacaglia and Ciaccona in German Keyboard Music of the Baroque Period", 66.

Fischer's a-minor *Passacaille* differs greatly from his d-minor Passacaglia, most notably in its formal structure and the bass ostinato pattern. An early work, *Passacaille* in a-minor exhibits a rondo structure (ABACADA) based on the descending tetrachord pattern A-G-F-E. The d-minor Passacaglia, by contrast, is a continuous variation form based largely on a modified bass ostinato format (Example III:1). In addition, key relationships differ from those in the a-minor work

Example III:1: *Passacaille* in a-minor, mm. 1-9

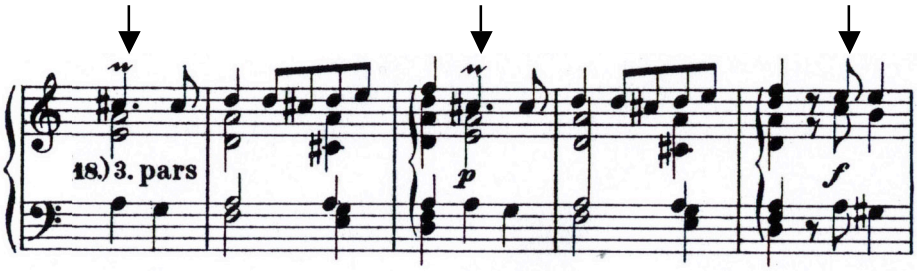


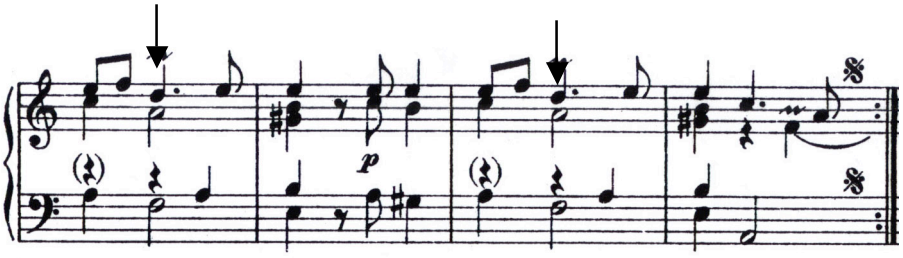
(for d-minor Passacaglia, mm. 1-5, see p. 59)

The first and third couplets (B and D) of the *Passacaille* are thirteen measures long, while the second couplet (C) is nine measures and the refrain eight measures in length. In this way, Fischer achieves a degree of structural balance. In terms of its key structure, the refrain remains in a minor mode throughout, couplet D modulates to the minor dominant key, e minor, and couplets B and C are unstable in tonality. By contrast, the Passacaglia in d-minor is divided into four key areas of irregular length: a long opening section in the tonic (d-minor, mm. 1-80), another long section in the relative major F (mm. 81-139) and a shorter section that opens in the minor dominant, a-minor (mm. 140-177), followed by a short coda that returns to the tonic (mm. 177-185).

Fischer uses a descending tetrachord, a characteristic Baroque bass ostinato pattern, in the opening of his early passacaglia. Following a full statement of the original tetrachord pattern in the refrain, however, the work no longer adheres to the pattern and is occasionally transformed to the pattern A-G$^{\#}$-F-E or is modified to a five-note A-G-F-E-D pattern (Example III:2, the third couplet, *Passacaille* in a-minor).

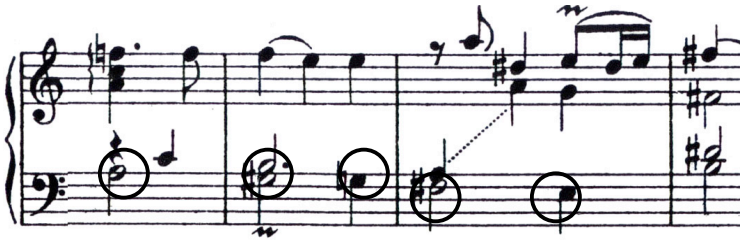
Example III:2: *Passacaille* in a-minor, third couplet





In addition, Fischer creates a new chromatic bass line in the fourth couplet. (Example III:3, mm. 32-35).

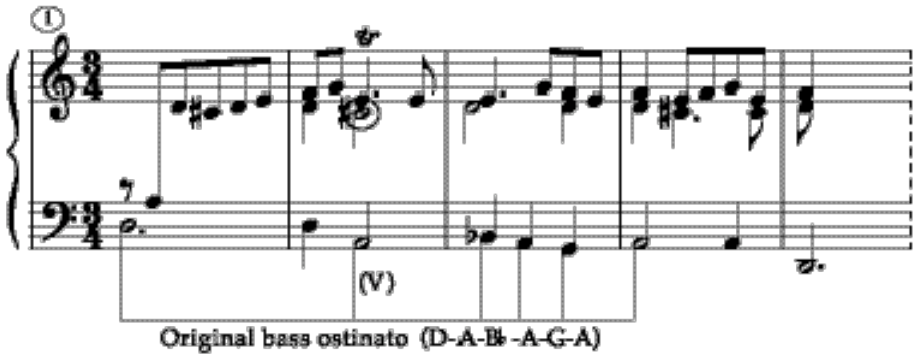
Example III:3: *Passacaille* in a-minor, mm. 32-35.



In his d-minor Passacaglia, Fischer demonstrates a more varied use of the bass descending four-note ostinato pattern than in the a-minor *Passacaille*. A continuous variation, the work contains paired four-measure phrases in which a bass ostinato is continuously repeated through variety of patterns, including descending, ascending, and ornamented figures. Fischer extends his descending four-note pattern by skipping the 7th scale degree and leading the bass down from

the 6th degree to the 4th degree, before resolving up to the 5th degree (mm. 1-5) (Example III:4).

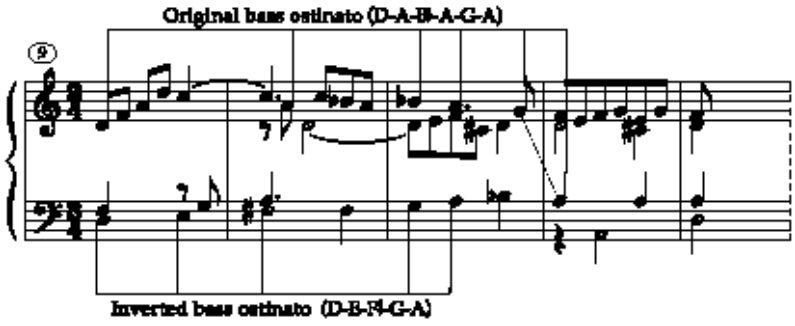
Example III:4: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 1-5



The voice leading is most likely the reason for this deviation from his regular four-note-descending pattern, because the V-chord that is needed to establish the key requires the raised 7th scale degree, which, in turn, would create an augmented 2nd in a descending scalewise motion. Rather than including the raised 7th scale degree, the leading tone, in his bass ostinato, Fischer employs the leading tone in either the alto or the soprano wherever a V-chord is needed. If a V chord is not part of the harmonic progression, we do find the lowered 7th scale degree as part of the descending bass line.

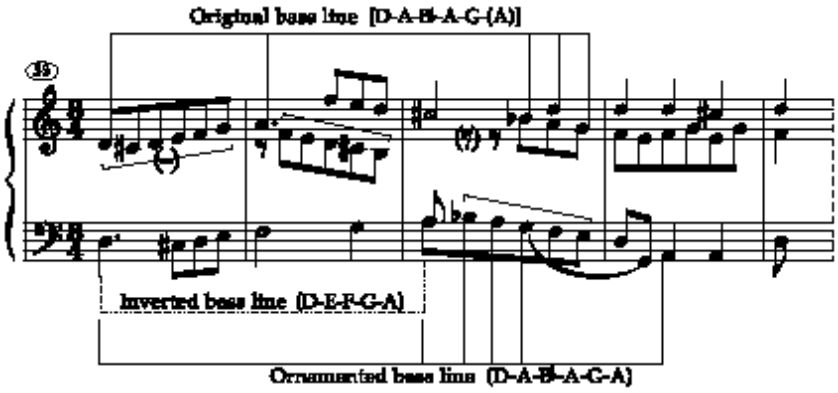
In mm. 9-13, the bass ostinato pattern occurs in the alto and soprano parts, while the stepwise bass motion is inverted.

Example III:5: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 9-13



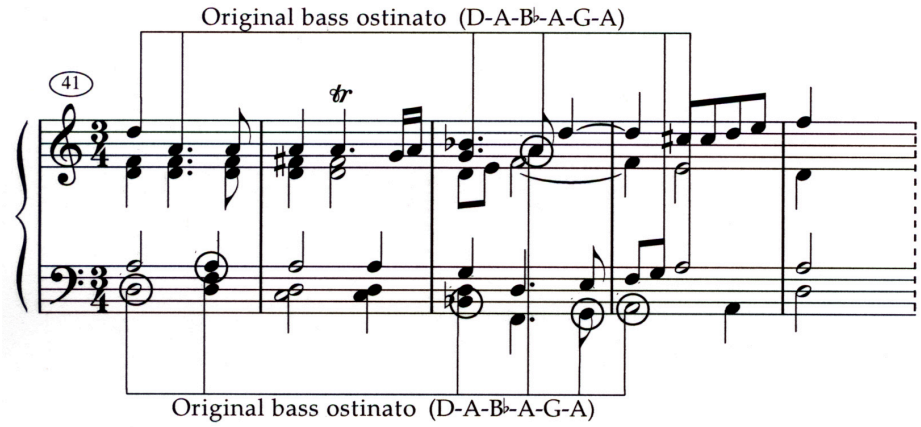
In mm. 33-37, Fischer ornaments his inverted bass line by adding a neighbor tone. In this passage (mm. 33-37), Fischer combines the inversion of the stepwise bass motion with the varied bass pattern that we find in the beginning of the piece, while the inversion of the stepwise bass motion is applied to the soprano part as melody.

Example III:6: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 33-37



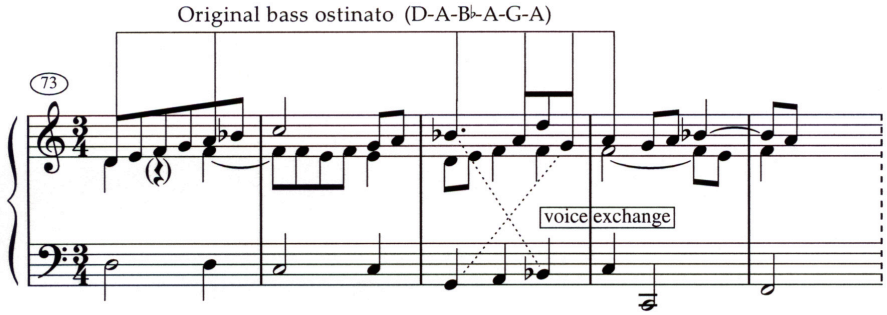
In mm. 41-45, the pattern is not limited to the bass register, but includes the upper and inner voices as well.

Example III:7: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 41-45



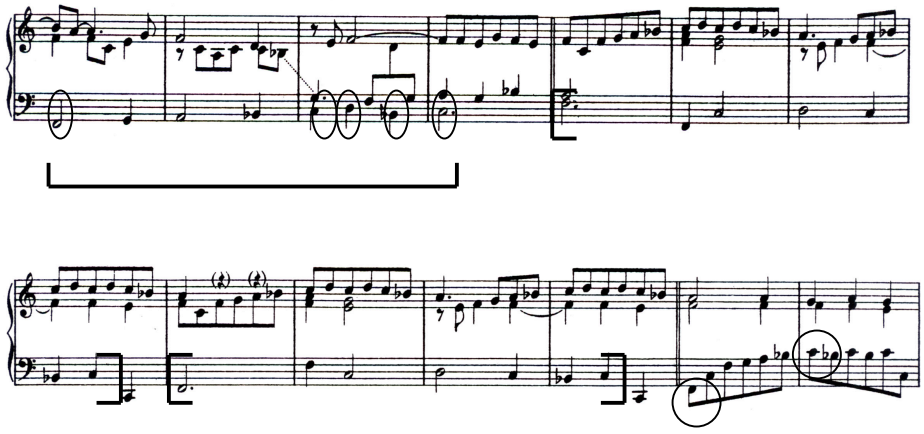
Fischer even isolates the ostinato in the top voice in mm. 73-77.

Example III:8: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 73-77



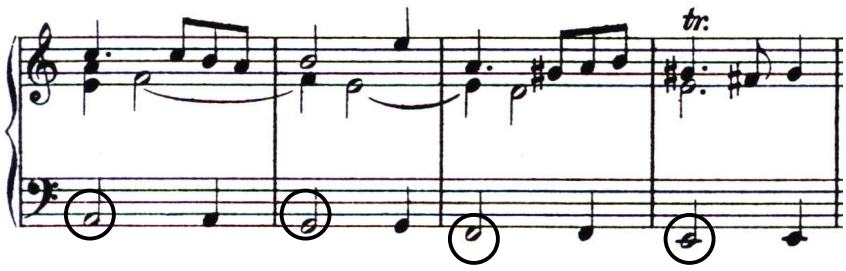
The bass ostinato pattern is raised to the third degree by the modulation from d-minor to F-major in mm. 77-90.

Example III:9: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 77-90



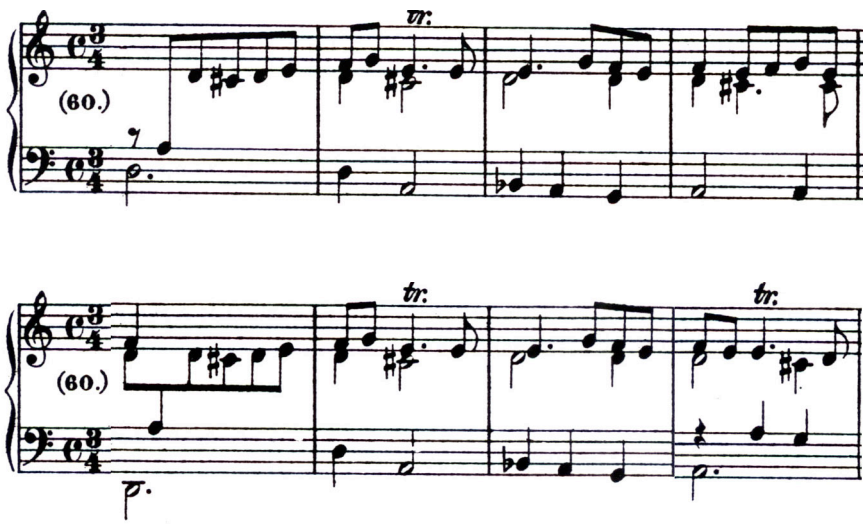
Interestingly, although the original bass melody, D-A-B^{b}-A-G-A, does not appear in the a-minor part, Fischer still keeps the harmonic pattern I-V throughout the piece by introducing a descending tetrachord pattern, A-G-F-E (mm. 144-147):

Example III:10: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 144-147



The beginning of these two passacaglias features the pairing of four-measure phrases, a typical device of Fischer's pieces. The second four-measure phrase in the *Passacaille* in a-minor is a variation of the first four measures while the second phrase in the Passacaglia in d-minor is the repetition of the first one (Example III:11 and see Example III:1).

Example III:11: Passacaglia in d-minor, mm. 1-8



This eight-measure phrase is maintained throughout the later passacaglia, whereas this structure is broken in the couplets of the *Passacaille* in a-minor. Fischer seems to pursue a little freedom in the early work while keeping the French tradition, and to create a fruitful German variation style in the late work.

Fischer composed four chaconnes for the harpsichord in which he attempted various approaches to the length of the works, the formal structure, and the bass pattern. The length of each chaconne is flexible: the Chaconne in G-major is 121 measures long; the Chaconne in a-minor is 33 measures long; the Chaconne in e-minor is 25 measures long; and the Chaconne in F-major is 132 measures long.

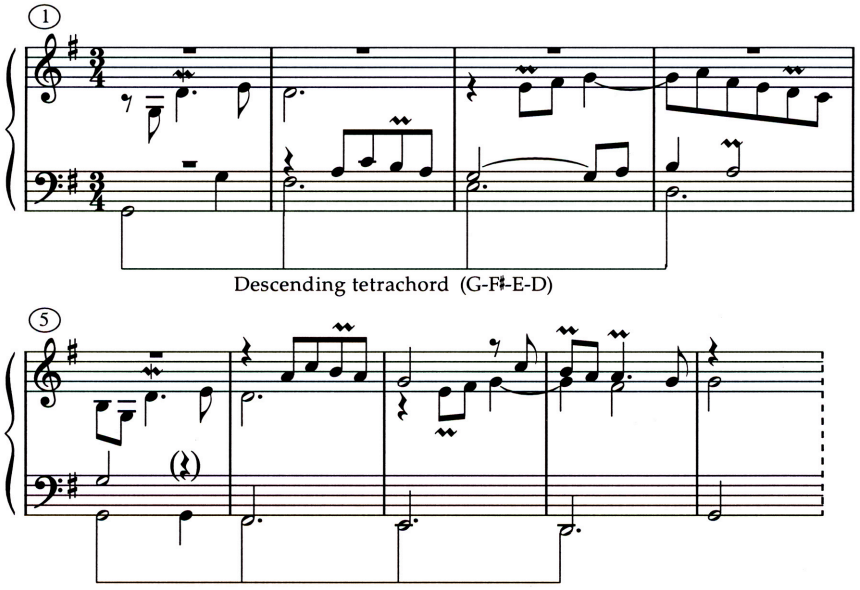
Fischer adopts continuous variation from with different key relationships in all of his keyboard chaconnes. The G-major Chaconne is in three sections of almost equal length, keeping the same tonal center throughout with a modal change between major and minor: G-major (mm. 1-42); g-minor (mm. 43-80); and again G-major (mm. 81-121). The Chaconne in F-major is in three key areas of irregular length: F-major (mm. 1-72); C-major (mm. 73-88); F-major (mm. 89-132). The a-minor chaconne stays in the tonic key throughout the piece and the e-minor chaconne basically remains in the tonic key despite brief tonicizations of a ii-chord and a iv-chord in the middle of the piece by means of altered dominants (see Example III:15).

Fischer adopts the ostinato pattern in the bass most commonly as a descending four-note pattern in his keyboard chaconnes, with the exception of the chaconne in e-minor. In addition, a typical device of Fischer's pieces is the

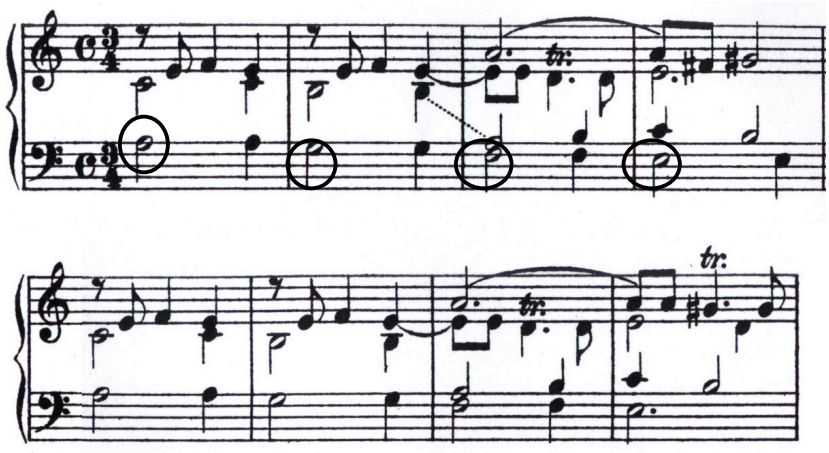
pairing of four-measure phrases, as can be seen in the openings of the chaconnes in G-major and a-minor (Example III:12).

Example III:12: Chaconne in G-major (mm. 1-9) and Chaconne in a-minor (mm. 1-8)

Chaconne in G-major (mm. 1-9)

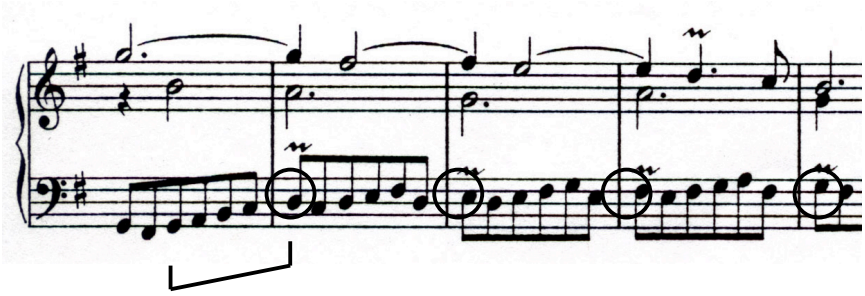


Chaconne a-minor (mm. 1-8)



A descending tetrachord pattern, G-F#-E-D, occurs throughout the G-major chaconne, although the rhythmic pattern is modified slightly. For example, the bass ostinato rhythmic pattern (♩. ♩. ♩. ♩.)is altered to either ♩ ♩♩ ♩♩ ♩♩ ♩ (mm. 65-68) or ♫ ♫♫ (mm. 81-82). Moreover, the pattern occurs as the suspension figure in the top voice, along with an inverted bass pattern in mm. 33-37 (Example III:13).

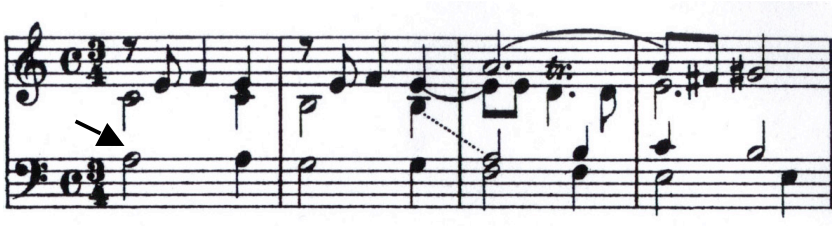
Example III:13: Chaconne in G-major, mm. 33-37



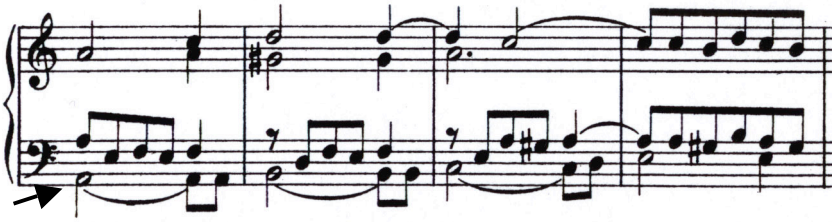
The bass ostinato pattern in the a-minor chaconne occurs in three different forms along with slightly modified rhythmic patterns: a descending minor tetrachord (♩ ♩♩ ♩♩ ♩♩ ♩); an inverted ascending pattern (♩ ♫♩ ♫♩ ♫); and a chromatic pattern (Example III:14, mm. 1-4, 17-20, and 25-28).

Example III:14: Changing ostinato patterns in the a-minor chaconne:

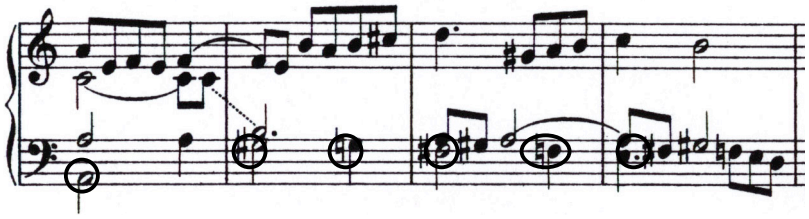
mm. 1-4.



mm. 17-20.



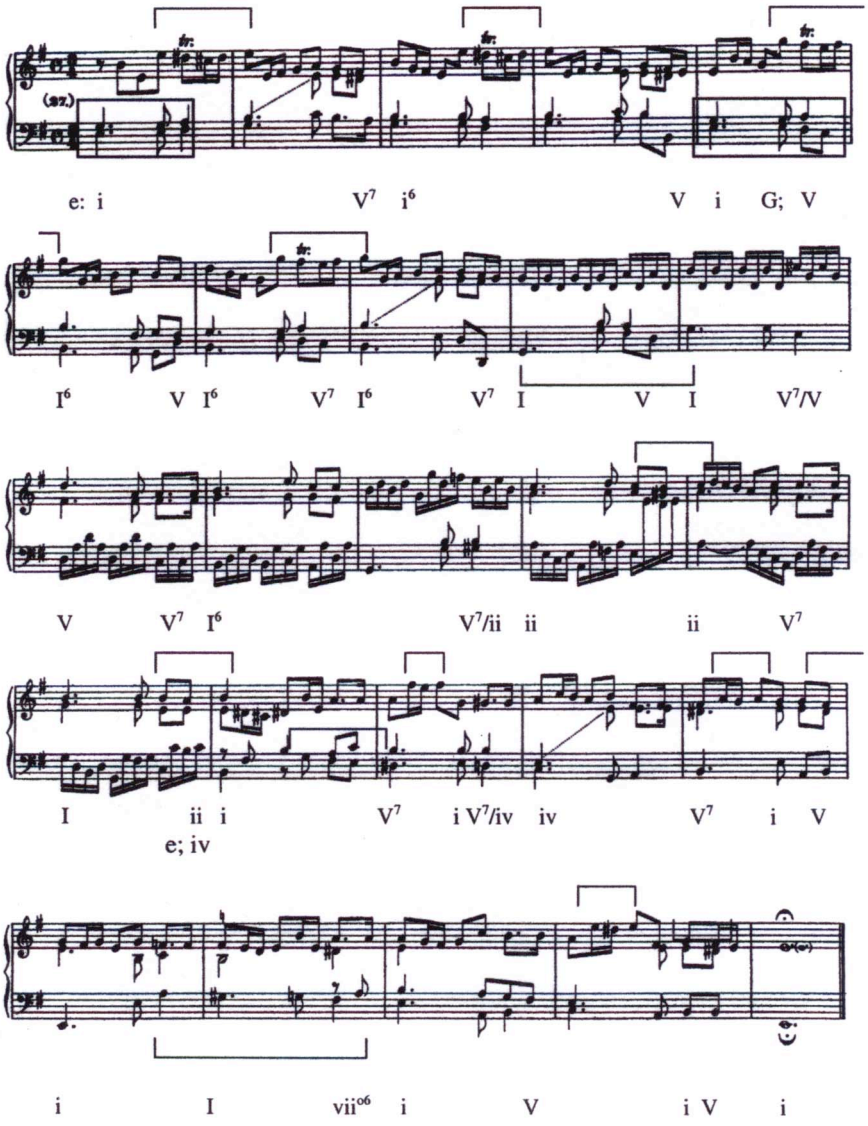
mm. 25-28.



Such a chromatic handling is shown in the third episode in mm. 32-35 of the a–minor Passacaglia as well (see Example III: 3). Fischer's way of transforming the tetrachord chromatically is to extend the tetrachord by means of interpolating altered notes while preserving the original.

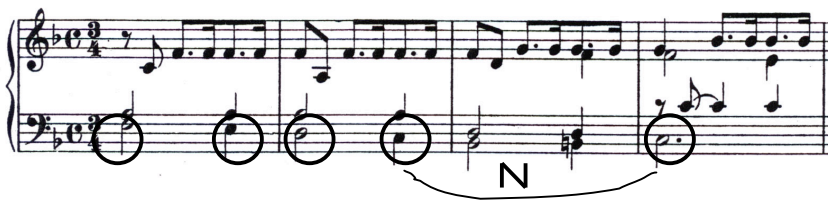
In contrast to those two chaconnes, the Chaconnes in e-minor and F-major are rare examples in which Fischer strays away from the descending four-note ostinato motive. Deviating from the usual design in Fischer's pieces, the *Chaconne* in e-minor is based on the repetition of a rhythmic figure (♩. ♪♩) and a harmonic pattern (I-V) rather than typical descending four-note pattern. In addition, the motive (E-D$^{\#}$-E), which is essentially a lower-neighbor pattern, recurs throughout the piece, first with ornamentations, later un-ornamented. This motive functions to create unity in this piece (Example III: 15).

Example III:15: Chaconne in e-minor



The ostinato pattern in the F-major Chaconne, F-E-D-C-B^{b}-B-C, is derived from a stepwise descending pattern. Ultimately, Fischer extended to the progression I-V by using the notes B^{b} and B♮ as a lower neighboring tone between the note "C" in mm. 2 and 4 (Example III:16).

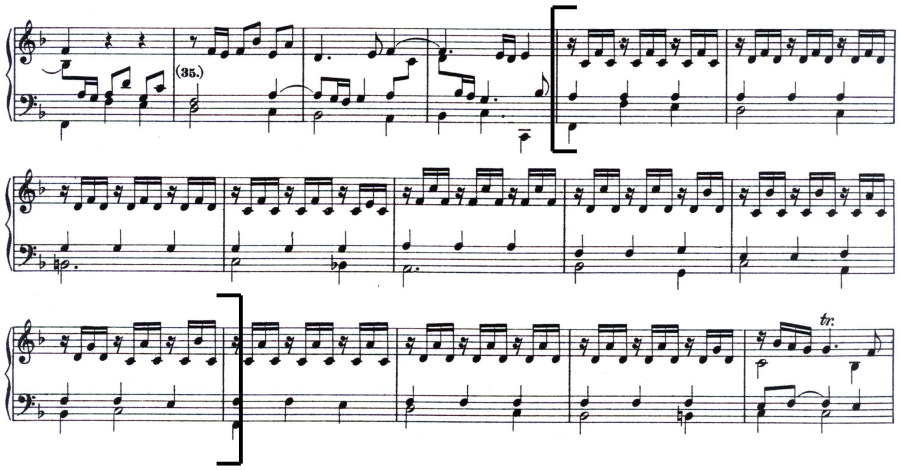
Example III:16: Extension of bass pattern in the F-major chaconne (mm. 1-4)



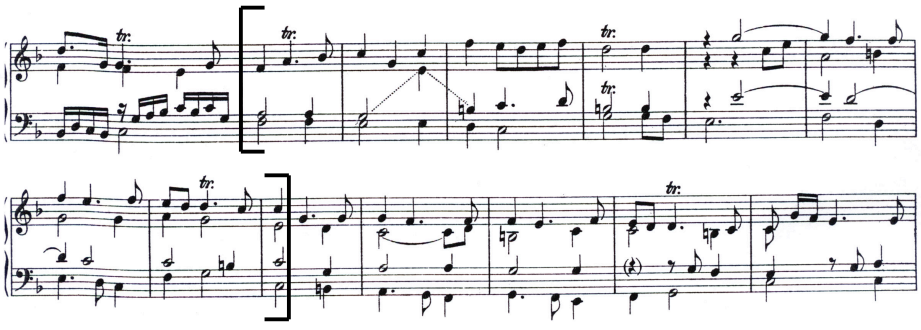
In the phrase structure, Fischer basically follows a typical pairing of a four-measure phrase structure in his first two chaconnes. However, in his Chaconne in F-major, Fischer applies not only a fixed four-measure phrase length which never repeats the same melody, but also an eight-measure phrase (Example III:17, mm. 17-25, and 53- 61).

Example III:17: Four- and eight-measure phrases in the F-major Chaconne (mm. 17-25 and 53-61)

mm. 17-25.

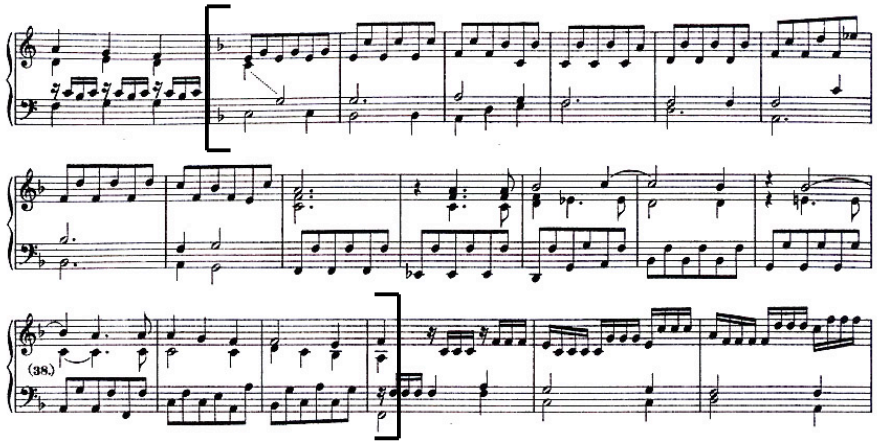


mm. 53-61.



In particular, the treatment of the bass seems to be freer in mm. 89-105 (Example III:18).

Example III:18: Free treatment of ostinato bass in the F-major Chaconne (mm. 89-105)



Fischer builds and develops his melodic figuration based not only on the ostinato figure, but also on other harmonic and melodic elements.

Motive and Imitation in Fischer's Chaconnes and Passacaglias

Unlike Couperin, Fischer shows very little interest in systematic imitation procedure in his early passacaglia and chaconne. Fischer's interest in contrapuntal techniques is generally shown in the pieces of the late collection, *Musikalischer Parnassus* (1738), as simple imitation, a sequence pattern, voice exchange, and

invertible counterpoint. Richard Hudson provides several instances of the motivic and imitation idea in various passacaglia and chaconne traditions:

> [T]he passacaglia ostinato in guitar music is also mainly a matter of continually changing bass-lines, even though, due to the nature of the style, *the basses themselves are often only implied.*
> *The upper voices may also play a part in the ostinato effect produced by the unit of the single phrase*. . . A discant melody, an inner voice, or all the upper voices may occasionally be repeated exactly from phrase to phrase
> . . .
> Often there is a tendency, especially in more contrapuntal music, to relate adjacent pairs of phrases more closely. . . Pairs occasionally occur incidentally in Italian keyboard music, where a melodic motive from the first phrase moves to motive continues in the upper voice…Occasionally exact repetition of all the voices of an entire phrase occurs…It is with the French orchestral passacaille, however, that pairing becomes a consistent element of style…The German example represents the pairing technique in its most fully developed form, with double bars appearing only between pairs.[56]

As compared to Couperin, Fischer developed his own melodic procedure not only based on ostinato figures but also mining for deeper motivic developments. The Passacaglia in d-minor reflects this characteristic. In mm. 17-21, Fischer applied a rhythmically diminished version of the bass line to the soprano part as a melody (Example III:19).

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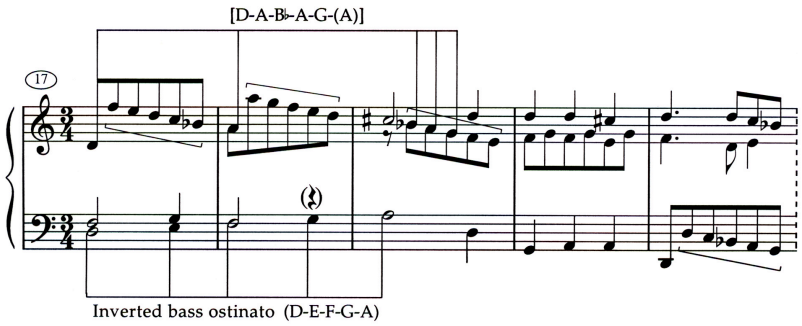
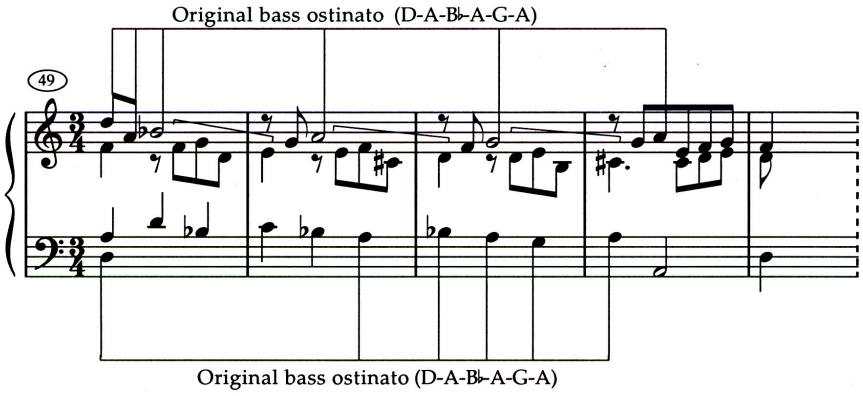
[56] Richard Hudson, *The Folia, the Sarabande, the Passacaglia, and the Chaconne: the Historical Evolution of Four Forms that Originated in Music for the Five-Course Spanish Guitar,* vol.3, xxviii, Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler. 1982 (Italics mine).

Example III:19: Passacaglia in d-minor: rhythmic diminution of bass line in soprano (mm. 17-21)



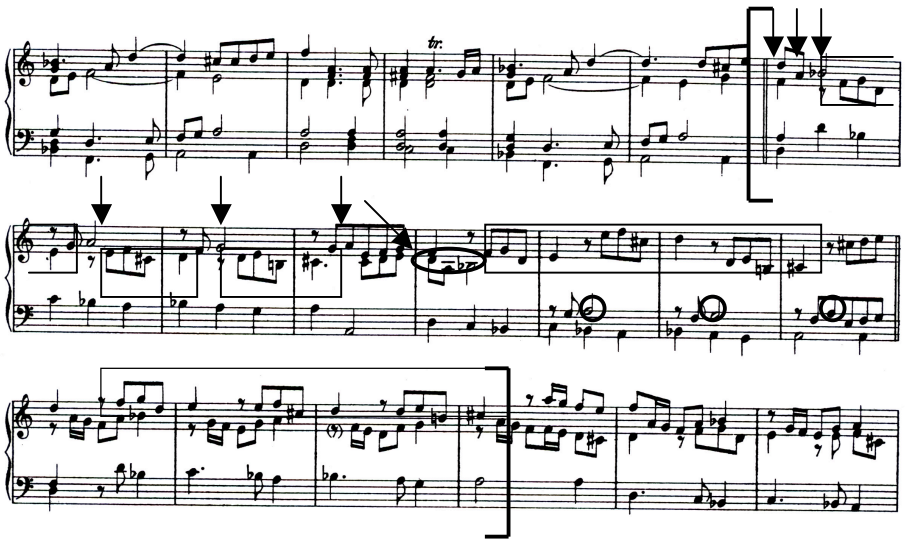
In addition, the fragment (f-g-d-e) of the bass ostinato appears in the middle voice as a sequence in mm. 49-53 along with a varied bass ostinato in the soprano and bass parts (Example III:20), achieving motivic unity.

Example III:20: Passacaglia in d-minor: nested ostinato (mm. 49-53)



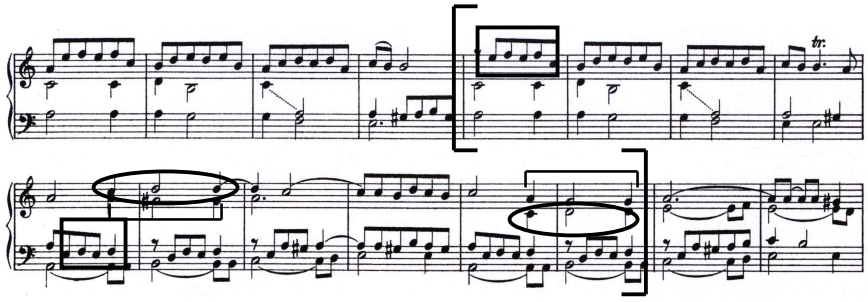
A varied bass ostinato in the soprano part in mm. 49-52 (d-a-b^{b}-a-g-a) moves to the middle part in mm. 53-60. At the same time, a sequence pattern of the bass ostinato fragment (f-g-d-e) in mm. 49-52 appears in the soprano part in mm. 53-56. Thus, a voice exchange occurs in this variation (Example III:21).

Example III:21: Passacaglia in d-minor: fragments and octave exchange (mm. 49-60)



Invertible counterpoint can be seen in mm. 13-22 in the a-minor Chaconne (Example III:22).

Example III:22: Chaconne in a-minor: invertible counterpoint (mm. 13-22)



In general, Fischer's early harpsichord suite collection, *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* (1696) favors ornamentation over motivic imitation. Fischer's melodic lines for the chaconne and passacaglia in the *Musikalischer Parnassus* are more flowing and contain less ornamentation than those of the *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein*. In addition, William Bates implies an Italian influence: "the Italian formula procedure that was transferred to South Germany by Kerll and modified by Muffat has evolved into a type of basso ostinato procedure in which many, but not all, of the phrases are built on one specific bass motive."[57] This may have meant that Fischer developed his musical style closer to the German contrapuntal tradition than to the ornamented French style.

[57] Bates, "The Passacaglia and Ciaconna in German Keyboard Music of the Baroque Period," 34-35.

The Characteristic of Sarabande

Similar to F. Couperin, Fischer also shows the rhythmic characteristic of sarabande in various ways. All of Fischer's chaconnes and passacaglias are in slow triple meter. While these pieces do not uniformly have the strict emphasis on second beat characteristic of sarabande, the sarabande-like character is a common aspect, shown by the triple meter in which the second beat is longer than the first beat, and the chain of suspensions resolving on the second beat. In at least one case, the second beat is strongly emphasized: the five-note pattern in the third couplet of the a-minor *Passacaille* (see Example III: 2, mm. 23-31):

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The chaconne and passacaglia have as their origins the Spanish guitar music of the sixteenth century. In the hands of European composers during the Baroque, the genres primarily developed as keyboard works containing repeated musical elements. French composers in particular created a structure combining the rondeau and continuous bass ostinato. The ground bass characteristics of these genres consist of either four- or eight-measure phrases. In the upper voice, these phrases typically coincide with structural elements of the bass pattern. The figuration, texture, or melody is altered with each repetition of the bass, and as a result, continuous variation occurs.

The contemporaries François Couperin and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer developed contrasting styles in their chaconnes and passacaglias. In particular, the two composers wrote the genres as movements within suites. Fischer's chaconnes and passacaglia follow French tradition rather than the style of German composers Kerll and Muffat, who treated these genres as a pair. Both Couperin and Fischer adhere to traditional characteristics of the genre such as the use of triple meter; emphasis on the second beat using long note durations, simple ornaments, or chains of suspensions and resolutions; and development of a bass ostinato pattern.

Despite similarities between the two composers, however, important compositional distinctions must be made. Like Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, Louis Couperin, and other French Baroque contemporaries,

François Couperin combines his chaconne and passacaglias with the rondo principle and saturates the genres with diverse transformations of a single motivic idea, thus creating motivic coherence. Couperin's works are relatively consistent in length, all being between 112 and 174 measures. The rondeau is four measures long with a repeat while each couplet varies in length depending on the musical contents; however, in his last passacaglia, Couperin develops the concept of the "Classical" phrase, consisting of two eight-measure phrases, the first ending with a half cadence, the second with a perfect cadence. Furthermore, in these genres Couperin relies heavily on imitation procedures, and utilizes a variety of musical forms. The genres adhere to traditional principles of tonality, with the chaconne in major and passacaglias in either in major or minor keys.

Fischer's chaconnes and passacaglias, by contrast, exhibit a greater variety in length, ranging from as few as 33 to as many as 191 measures. Fischer's bass ostinatos, typically four measures in length, vary from two eight measures. In addition, Fischer relies more systematically on continuous variation form with the exception of rondo forms appearing in his early passacaglia. Furthermore, Fischer more often relies on a melodic line with ornamentations rather than a strict contrapuntal idea. Such a case can be seen clearly in the early keyboard collection, *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein*. Furthermore, Fischer's methods of transforming his tetrachord motive differ slightly from those of Couperin. Fischer

extends the tetrachord by means of interpolating altered notes, thus preserving the original tetrachord. This complex and audacious use of motivic expansion can be seen clearly in his later work, Passacaglia in d minor. His manipulation of the bass ostinato pattern becomes more creative towards the end of his compositional career. Similarly to L. Couperin, Fischer used minor mode for his passacaglias and both major and minor for the chaconnes.

F. Couperin successfully carried on the French tradition in his chaconne and passacaglias while simultaneously developing his particular style in the genre. Fischer combined the Italian tradition and French tradition, both incorporating bass ostinato and maintaining formal structure and texture throughout his chaconnes and passacaglias. It is through these accomplishments and innovations that François Couperin and Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer played important roles in the development of keyboard chaconne and passacaglia during the late Baroque period.

* * *

The ways in which various interpretative elements integrate with appropriate tempo, ornamentations, and articulation is a matter faced by all modern pianists. One significant challenge facing the performer of chaconnes and passacaglias lies in the fact that a series of musical gestures must be continually varied while unity is maintained throughout. It is valuable to consider how a

pianist might interpret Couperin and Fischer's chaconnes and passacaglias, which combine the bass-ostinato with rondo form, and how she might treat those pieces given their descriptive titles. For both of these composers, the most primary considerations in performing chaconnes and passacaglias are related to the sarabande. Since Couperin followed the common characteristics of his predecessors in their ornamentation and rhythmic conventions, the performer must pay more attention to those issues when playing that composer's works. On the other hand, since Fischer more commonly uses tuneful melodies that contain elements of counterpoint, creating a variety of articulation and producing a variety in tone color are considerable issues for the modern pianist in performing works by Fischer. Ultimately, the most essential consideration in playing chaconnes and passacaglias is that of maintaining musical direction with the bass-ostinato throughout the piece in order to create a variety of musical gestures. The beautiful subtlety inherent in mid-eighteenth-century harpsichord music can effectively be evoked with modern piano techniques. A solid understanding of historical and theoretical background will enable well-informed decisions regarding the most appropriate articulations. In addition, personal taste and imagination should be incorporated into the decision-making process.

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Vita

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